

Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Christian Church

A Parish of the Diocese of New England of the Orthodox Church in America

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Sunday, January 3, 2021

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 5. Forefeast of the Theophany. Sunday before Theophany. Holy Prophet Malachi (400 B.C.). Martyr Gordius at Cæsarea in Cappadocia (4th c.). Ven. Genevieve of Paris (5th c.).

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2021/01/03>

Feast of Theophany – This week! Here’s the schedule, and a description of the Feast

This coming week we will celebrate the Great Feast of the Theophany of our Lord. This Feast falls each year on January 6.

Schedule of Services and Other Events:

To mark the feast we will have Vespers with the Great Blessing of Water online, as a virtual service, via “Zoom”, on Tuesday evening, January 5, beginning at 7:00 PM. Then, we will have in-person Festal Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning, January 6, beginning at 9:15 AM. In advance, we thank Protodeacon Paul, Patty, and Michael Nimchek, who will serve as the Cantors and Readers for this Festal Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning. The usual and customary public health safety protocols that we have been observing for in-person services at the Church will prevail—preregistration, attendance limited to 25, use of facemasks, etc.

This week, to allow for the above described schedule of Theophany services, our usual Tuesday night Bible Study online gathering will take place on Thursday evening, instead of Tuesday evening, from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM. Also, we will not have our usual Wednesday morning Matins (Morning Prayers) Service on Wednesday morning. Instead, as described above, we will be celebrating the Festal Divine Liturgy for Theophany on Wednesday morning.

Description of the Feast:

The Feast of the Theophany of our Lord

By Fr. Thomas Hopko

This is an edited and adapted excerpt from Fr Thomas’s four volume series of catechetical (educational) books, The Orthodox Faith, the text of which is available at www.oca.org.

The sixth of January is the feast of the Epiphany [also known as Theophany]. Originally it was the one Christian feast of the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. It included the celebration of Christ’s birth, the adoration of the Wise Men [Magi], and all of the childhood events of Christ such as his circumcision and presentation to the temple as well as his baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast, like Easter and Pentecost, was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights.

Epiphany means shining forth or manifestation. The feast is often called, as it is in the Orthodox service books, Theophany, which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present day celebration is on

the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in the baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus identifies himself with sinners as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), the “Beloved” of the Father whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins (Luke 3:21, Mark 1:35). And he is revealed as well as One of the Divine Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and by the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast: This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast:

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling You his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who has revealed Yourself and has enlightened the world, glory to You! (Troparion of the Feast)

Today You have appeared to the universe, and Your Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise You: You have come and revealed Yourself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion of the Feast)

The main feature of the feast of the Epiphany is the Great Blessing of Water. It is prescribed to follow both the Divine Liturgy of the eve of the feast and the Divine Liturgy of the day itself. Usually it is done just once in parish churches at the time when most people can be present. It begins with the singing of special hymns and the censing of the water which has been placed in the center of the church building. Surrounded by candles and flowers, this water stands for the beautiful world of God’s original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes this service of blessing is done out of doors at a place where the water is flowing naturally.

During the service of Blessing, after the epistle (1 Corinthians 1:10-14) and the gospel reading (Mark 1:9-11), the special Great Litany is chanted invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon those who will partake of it. It ends with the great prayer of the cosmic glorification of God in which Christ is called upon to sanctify the water, and all men and all creation, by the manifestation of his saving and sanctifying divine presence by the indwelling of the Holy and Good and Life-creating Spirit.

As the Troparion of the feast is sung, the celebrant immerses the Cross into the water three times and then proceeds to sprinkle the water in the four directions of the world. He then blesses the people and their homes with the sanctified water, which stands for the salvation of all men and all creation which Christ has effected by his “epiphany” in the flesh for the life of the world.

Sometimes people think that the blessing of water and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it over everyone and everything is a “paganism” which has falsely entered the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God in the Old Testament, and that in the Christian Church it has a very special and important significance.

It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has been immersed in the streams of the Jordan, all matter is sanctified and made pure in him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the wickedness of men. In the Lord’s epiphany all creation becomes good again, indeed “very good,” the way that God himself made it and proclaimed it to be in the beginning when “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2) and when the “Breath of Life” was breathing in man and in everything that God made (Genesis 1:30; 2:7).

The world and everything in it is indeed “very good” (Genesis 1:31) and when it becomes polluted, corrupted and dead, God saves it once more by effecting the “new creation” in Christ, his divine Son and our Lord by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 6:15). This is what is celebrated on Epiphany, particularly in the Great Blessing of Water. The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world—through its “prime element” of water—in the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit. It tells us that man and the world were indeed created and saved in order to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19), the “fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22). It tells us that Christ, in whom “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” is and shall be truly “all, and in all” (Colossians 2:9, 3:11). It tells us as well that the “new heavens and the new earth” which God has promised through his prophets and apostles (Isaiah 66:2; 2 Peter 3:13, Revelations 21:1) are truly “with us” already now in the mystery of Christ and His Church.

Thus, the sanctification and sprinkling of the Epiphany water is no pagan ritual. It is the expression of the most central fact of the Christian vision of man, his life and his world. It is the liturgical testimony that the vocation and destiny of creation is to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

– Fr. Thomas Hopko

PARISH PRAYER LIST

We pray for all victims of disease, disaster, difficulty, and senseless violence throughout the world, especially in this time of pestilence and civil unrest.

+ THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED THIS LIFE: *Memory Eternal!*

First of all, we pray for all the thousands of victims of COVID-19. Memory Eternal!

Newly Departed

His Eminence, Archbishop David of Alaska	d. 11/27/2020
Luke H.—son of Fr. Steven and Mat. Anne H.	d. 12/17/2020
Maryann Kendall—well-known lay person in the CT Deanery	d. 12/16/2020
Mary Ellen Zobbi—wife of Robert Zobbi, of the Waterbury Parish	d. 12/12/2020

Anniversaries of Repose – Memory Eternal!

Walter Sobestanovich	1/3/1993
Vassily (Charles) Cartona	1/4/1988
John Skovran	1/4/2003
Neda Brenner	1/4/2004
Sonya Petroff	1/4/2019
Lewis Plasko	1/5/1991
Nikolai Jakimenko	1/5/1997
Cyril Goidich	1/6/1937
Malakai Motylvk	1/6/1941
Anne Toropilo Rossini	1/6/2009
Maria Duke	1/7/1946
Joseph Arburr	1/7/1970
John Witik	1/9/1988

THOSE IN NEED OF GOD'S MERCY AND HELP

First of all, we pray for all those suffering due to the present pestilence which is COVID-19, and those working to alleviate their suffering.

Persons captive and suffering for the Faith

Metropolitan Paul and Archbishop John—hostages in Syria

Those who are sick and suffering

Archpriest Michael—former pastor of our parish; reoccurrence of illness
Archpriest John—Fr. John H.'s uncle through marriage; cancer
Fyodor (Frank) G.—suffering from Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
Dolores T.—permanent colon malfunction following colon cancer treatment
child Drew—grandson of friends of the Nimcheks; ongoing treatment for eye cancer
Daryne—facing health challenges; daughter of Bob and Vera Martin
Donna—Ann S.'s niece, Deb W.'s cousin; kidney disease
Dayrl—Ann S.'s niece, Deb W.'s cousin; kidney disease
JoAnn—acquaintance of Jeanne Moore; ovarian cancer
MaryEllen—Louine K.'s daughter-in-law; suffering with Huntington's Disease
Yelena "Lenna" M.—overcoming, by God's grace, serious health challenges
Katie and Aubrey—a mother and daughter for whom we have been asked to pray
Tanya B.—suffering long-term and lingering effects of brain hemorrhage

Mary Lynn—friend of Donna O.; battling breast cancer
Barbara—friend of Patty N.; unwell and in need of prayerful support
James B.—husband of a Waterbury parishioner; chronically unwell
Dorothy F.—Waterbury parishioner; still recovering from a serious surgery
Rosie D.—ongoing health issues
Michael "Mike" L.—ongoing health issues
child George—9-year-old son of a Kenyan Orthodox priest; quite unwell
Bill M.—has experienced some health issues lately, please keep in prayer
Christopher—friend of Kathy M.; struggling with cancer
Paula—friend of Jim L.; struggling with cancer
Dimitri—brother of Carolyn P.; health issues
child Hattie—injured in freak accident; request of a family in our parish
Maryna B.—dealing with some health issues
Subdn. Joseph—recent issue with a painful hip joint
Thomas—Patty N.'s nephew; battling cancer
Wayne—Donna O.'s father
Vickie—a woman for whom we have been asked to pray
Sam—Vickie's husband, struggling with multiple health issues
Richard—a man struggling with cancer, for whom we have been asked to pray
Sue—friend of Macrina H.; quite unwell at this time
Jody—Jacob J.'s father; recovering from significant back surgery
Helen—acquaintance of Helena G; in long-term care
Candace—acquaintance of Helena G; in need of prayers
Elaine H.—hip replacement surgery upcoming in January; our fellow parishioner
Maria O.—dialysis three times a week; recently injured in fall
Anna—Rdr. John Paul Sz.'s mother; quite ill at this time
Joanne—acquaintance of the Hopkos; quite ill and in need of prayers

Shut-ins and those resident in long-term Care Facilities

Alex—John D.'s brother, suffering permanent effects of stroke
Dolores—Bob M.'s mother, resident in long-term eldercare

Expectant Mothers

Shelby (Sophia) G. and the child to be born of her
Katherine and the child to be born of her—Fr. John's nephew's wife

Travelers, Those Soon to be Traveling, and Those Apart from Us

All those who are traveling, soon to be traveling, or apart from us

Those from among us serving on active duty in the Armed Forces

Joel O.—U.S. Navy; hospital corpsman ("medic")
Joseph B.—a Terryville neighbor; U.S. Marine Corps
Joshua P.—husband of a niece of Fr. John's; U.S. Army officer and pilot
Alexander—relative of Carolyn P.; 82nd Airborne Division soldier now home from abroad
Derek—relative of Carolyn P.; serving in Afghanistan in the U.S. Army
Ian H.—Fr. David K.'s son-in-law; preparing for overseas deployment, U.S. Army

Anniversaries of Marriage

NONE THIS WEEK

Birthdays

Marina Bharara	1/3
Donna Osuch	1/5

News and Notes

Wednesday Morning Matins Services, replaced this week by festal services: This week we will not have our usual Wednesday morning online "Zoom" Matins Service. Instead, as detailed on page one of this bulletin, we will be having festal services for the Feast of Theophany, which falls each year on January 6.

Bible Study, via "Zoom" – This week on Thursday evening, beginning at 7:00 PM: We have been holding weekly Bible Study sessions, via video teleconference ("Zoom") on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. This week, due to the Feast of the Theophany, and the schedule we have established to mark that Feast, which is detailed on page one of this bulletin, we will be having our weekly Bible Study session on Thursday evening, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. We will be continuing our reading and discussion of the First Letter to the Corinthians. Each week is an event unto itself, so, please, even if you haven't joined us before, feel free to join us this week, or at any time in the future.

Bible Study Companion Book: If you are interested in reading a book that will serve as a companion to the efforts we are presently making in Bible Study, this book may be a resource for you: *First and Second Corinthians: Straight From the Heart*. This book is written by Fr. Lawrence Farley, who is a priest in British Columbia, Canada, in a parish of the Orthodox Church in America's Archdiocese of Canada. It is published by Conciliar Press, Chesterton, Indiana (<https://store.ancientfaith.com/biblical-studies/>). Fr. Lawrence has written a whole series of accessible commentaries on parts of the Bible. In particular, his commentaries are written to be appreciated by and useful to Orthodox Christian lay people.

Support from the Parish: If you require financial or pastoral support during this vexing and challenging time, contact Fr. John, personally and confidentially, and he will endeavor to help you get the assistance that you need. All such contacts will be treated with strict confidentiality and great sensitivity. **Don't be shy: If you need help, please, do contact Fr. John.**

Donations to the Parish: Please, continue to support our parish during this challenging time. Donations to the Parish may be submitted via checks made out to and mailed to Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church, 34 Fairview Avenue, Terryville, CT 06786-6329. Also, a PayPal Donation "button" (<https://www.terryvilleorthodoxchurch.org/donatenow>) is located on our parish website to make online donations possible. Our parish is registered as a charity with PayPal, so we have slightly lower fees connected to the use of that means of receiving donations. For us, PayPal's fees are 2.2%, plus \$0.30 per transaction. (So, for example, a donation of \$100.00 given via PayPal will realize us actual income of \$97.50.)

Readings from Holy Scripture

Scripture Readings for the Sunday before the Feast of the Theophany

The Reading from the Second Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5-8)

My son Timothy: As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The Reading from the Gospel according to Saint Mark (Mark 1:1-8)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."