

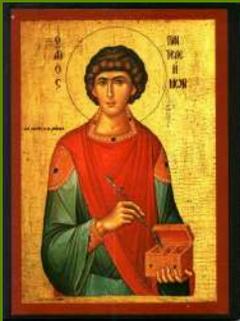
# St. Panteleimon Orthodox Church

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest

Fr. Andrew Bartek, Rector V. Rev. Anthony Spengler, Attached

Protodeacon Robert Northrup Reader James Tilghman

Parish Council President: Nicholas Cavaligos



**Sunday, January 3, 2016**

**Tone 6**

Gospel: St. Mark 1:1-8

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

*31st Sunday after Pentecost / Sunday before Theophany  
Prophet Malachi / Mtyr. Gordius / Ven. Genevieve of Paris*

## January Bulletin Sponsor

*Fr. Andrew in Memory of his parents George & Dorothy*

### *Liturgical & Event Schedule*

#### **Sunday, January 3 (Children's Sunday)**

9:10 am: Hours

9:30 am: D.L. / 40 Day / Annual Yolka Dinner

#### **Monday, January 4**

7:30 pm: Royal Hours

#### **Tuesday, January 5 (STRICT FAST DAY)**

6:00 pm: Holy Night Supper

7:00 pm: Compline w/ Great Blessing of Water

#### **Wednesday, January 6**

9:30 am: Divine Liturgy

Midnight: Old Calendar Christmas Divine Liturgy @ St Joe's in Wheaton

#### **Thursday, January 7**

9:30 am: Old Calendar Christmas Divine Liturgy @ St. Peter & Paul Uk. Orthodox Church in Palos Park

#### **Saturday, January 9**

10:00 am: Final Saturday work day @ Church

10:00 am: Baptism of Ileana Bruner @ Archangel Michael in Burbank followed by Divine Liturgy

1:00 pm: Carpatho-Rusyn Society Christmas Party @ St. Peter & Paul Burr Ridge

6:00 pm: Great Vespers

#### **Sunday, January 10**

9:10 am: Hours

9:30 am: Divine Liturgy / 40 Day  
NO SOCIAL TODAY

### **40 Days Eternal Memory**

January 3: Terrorist attack in Paris

January 10: Terrorist attack in Mali / Russian Pilot Oleg

January 17: Terrorist attack in CA & Michael

January 24: Firefighter Dan Capuano

### **SUNDAY JANUARY 24, 2016 RETIREMENT BANQUET FOR THE V. REV. ARCHPRIEST FR. ANDREW HARRISON**

Time: 1:00 pm -6:00 pm

Where: Ruffled Feathers Golf Club, 1 Pete Dye Drive, Lemont, IL 60439

Cost: \$30 per adult / \$15 per child 10 & under

Please respond by January 10, 2016 via call/text: 708-710-5966 or email: [lbetsanes@gmail.com](mailto:lbetsanes@gmail.com)

A cash bar will be available for soda & alcoholic beverages

Please remit pymt by Jan. 10, 2016 to: St Luke Orthodox, 10700 Kean Ave, Palos Hills, IL 60465

Contact Golf Club for special dietary requests @ 630-257-1000

### **SAVE THE DATES JANUARY 2016**

#### **Friday, January 8-9**

Holy Theophany Chapel in Williams Bay, WI To hold their Patronal Feast Day with His Grace Bishop Paul

#### **Sunday, January 17**

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Annual March For Life Chicago

#### **Sunday, January 24**

1:00 pm: Retirement Dinner for FR. Andrew Harrison

6:00 pm: Annual Sanctity of Life Prayer Service @ St. Peter & Paul Uk. Orthodox Church in Palos Park

#### **Saturday, January 30**

9:00 am: Speak Out IL

#### **Sunday, January 31**

Annual Greek Dinner in Chicago between our Parish & St. Peter & Paul Burr Ridge

## CHURCH BUILDING FUND DONATIONS

Ron & Pat Svara	\$ 30,000
Gil Harvey	\$ 1,000
Fr Andrew	\$ 200
William Rudolph Jr	\$ 50
Archpriest Anthony & Mat. Roberta	\$ 10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$31,260</b>

**Liturgical Item Fund:** \$0

**Office Supply Fund:** \$0



### Holy Theophany Chapel, Williams Bay, WI to celebrate patronal feast day January 8-9

The community of Holy Theophany Chapel here will observe its annual patronal feast day celebration on Friday and Saturday, January 8-9, 2016, according to Priest John Jones.

Vespers and the Great Blessing of Water will be celebrated at 6:00 p.m. Friday, January 8, at the chapel, located at N2107 State Road 67, Walworth, WI, on Highway 67 between Williams Bay and Fontana. On Saturday, January 9, the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m., followed by the Blessing of Geneva Lake and a luncheon and Dive for the Cross at Abbey Springs. His Grace, Bishop Paul will preside at both services.

Chicago Deanery clergy and faithful are invited to attend.

## 2016 - SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Beginning January 2016 there will be a variety of special collections for the whole month for various charities and/or events (including but not limited to):

St Tikhon's Seminary, St Vladimir's Seminary, St. Hermans Seminary, March For Life Chicago, OCMC, our Diocese Seminarians, Orthodox Christians for Life, Homeless of Summit, IOCC, Martha & Mary Maternity home

January: St Tikhon's Seminary

## IMPORTANT DATES JANUARY 2016

### Monday, January 11

Work begins in Church & Rectory Basement

### Tuesday, January 12

7:30 pm: Monthly Healing Service (1<sup>st</sup> time open to the Public)

### Tuesday, January 19

7:30 pm: Bible Study (1<sup>st</sup> time open to the Public)

### Wednesday, January 20

7:30 pm: Monthly Board Meeting

### Tuesday, January 26

7:30 pm: Orthodoxy 101 Classes (Open to Public)

## CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY LAKE MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Will be holding their *Annual Holiday Pot Luck Dinner* on Saturday January 9, 2016 @ St. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church 6980 County Line Rd. In Burr Ridge

Fellowship will be at Noon. Dinner: 1:00pm. There will be an Annual Raffle, Caroles & Carpatho-Rusyn News. All are welcome. You do not need to be a member.

Contact: Charlotte Conjelko (219-947-2375) for food items to bring, reservations or any questions pertaining to the dinner.

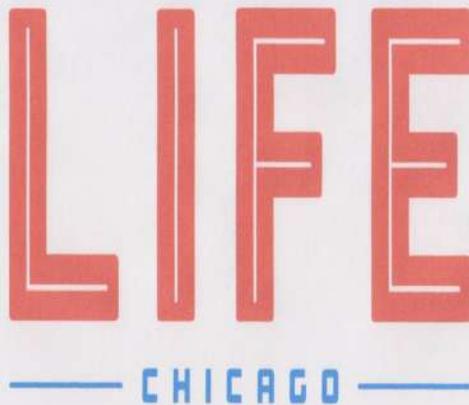
**“Thine Own of Thine Own, we  
offer unto Thee...”**



There are certain items & funds needed in the church in several areas:

Building Fund  
Liturgical supplies  
Paper & ink  
Wine

Beginning January, 2016 we will post our expenses in these areas and if anyone wants to contribute to defray costs, please specify it in memo of your check. God bless you for your generosity!



LOVIN' LIFE IN CHICAGO

**JANUARY 17, 2016, 2-4PM**

**MarchForLifeChicago.com**

marchforlifechicago@gmail.com

JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL  
**MARCH FOR LIFE CHICAGO**

STARTS AT FEDERAL PLAZA (50 W ADAMS)

— SPEAKERS —

**Melissa Ohden**, *Abortion Survivor*

**Archbishop Blase Cupich**  
*Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago*

**Bishop Paul of Chicago**  
*Orthodox Church of America*

**Pastor Wilfredo De Jesús**,  
*New Life Covenant Church in Chicago*

→ SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS ←

ILLINOIS RIGHT TO LIFE • ORTHODOX CLERGY ASSOCIATION OF CHICAGO • L.E.A.R.N. (LIFE EDUCATION AND RESOURCE NETWORK) CATHOLICVOTE.ORG • LAKE COUNTY RIGHT TO LIFE • AID FOR WOMEN ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO • ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO RESPECT LIFE OFFICE • STUDENTS FOR LIFE OF ILLINOIS • CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF ILLINOIS • COUPLES FOR CHRIST • FOUNDATION FOR FAMILY AND LIFE • PRO LIFE ACTION LEAGUE • RENOVACION CARISMÁTICA CATOLICA HISPANA • SPIRIT JUICE STUDIOS • PRO-LIFE WISCONSIN • DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD • ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS FOR LIFE • RELEVANT RADIO • THOMAS MORE SOCIETY • THE WOMEN'S CENTER • FAMILIES IN CHRIST JESUS

## **The Nativity Icon: The Good News in line, form and color**

*By Fr. John Parker*

During Catechumens class last weekend, I offered an explanation of the Icon of the Nativity. How beautiful it is that this Holy Icon tells the entire Nativity Story in one remarkable image! In the upper left, we see the three magi, those remarkable Persian Stargazers, who feature prominently in the Troparion of the Nativity: “Thy Nativity O Christ our God, has shown to the world the Light of Wisdom! For by it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on High. O Lord, Glory to Thee!”

At left middle, a choir of angels gazes in worship, singing to the Newborn King, as recorded in Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth, Peace among men with whom He is pleased!”

At bottom left, we find a curious scene, one interpretation of which is Joseph being tempted to divorce his wife: “And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly” (Matthew 1:19).

At bottom right, we encounter a most human scene: Two nurse-maidens wash the newborn Jesus. What more earthly sign of the incarnation of God in the flesh can there be? Though the divine “Existing One” (Revelation 1:8, a portion of which is recited in nearly every dismissal in the daily services of the Church)—as noted in His nimbus (o wv)—He is a human child. And what do you do with a newborn baby? Clean him up, wash him, and wrap him tightly in a blanket!

The movement from that corner scene to Christ in the manger is natural—there, at center, we see Him post-washing, wrapped not just in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7), but bound as in the traditional icon of the raising of Lazarus—already in His burial clothes.

With the ox and the ass, we now turn our attention to more specifically evangelistic details of the icon. Who are these mysterious creatures? According to one biblical interpretation, they are one clean animal, and one unclean animal, and thus represent “the whole world,” Jew and Gentile, gazing into the manger of illumination. More specifically, they are the two animals mentioned in Isaiah 1:3: “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.” There they are, two dumb creatures, the closest to the very person of the newborn Lord of All Creation, making a statement of remarkable proportions: the dumb animals recognize the

Messiah, but Israel does not! In light of Isaiah 1:3, a deeper meaning of the two animals appears: The ox and the ass know their master. Do you? Do I? This is an invitation to conviction.

Moving to the middle-right of the scene, we see two shepherds, who are eagerly receiving a word from an angel who blesses them with the name of Jesus on his fingertips. The angel said to them, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12). This is truly an inspiring passage, because it is literally evangelism: “Be not afraid, for behold I ‘evangelize’ you: a great joy shall come to the people today!” The Lord Christ is born! And here is how you can find and recognize Him. Can we not bolster ourselves to be such messengers to our friends and neighbors?

Finally, a most ponderous and ponderable image, in the largest figure in the icon: the Virgin Mary. It should not surprise us that she features prominently at center, and the closest human being to her newborn Son, the Savior of the World. But why is she not facing Him? We recall Luke 2:15ff: “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” The Mother of God gazes not so much away from Jesus as she does towards the shepherds—who themselves have a double focus: one of receiving, one of giving. These same shepherds who heard the blessed Good News from the angels, turned and told Mary and Joseph. Heard and told, heard and told.

Finally, we make a leap to an earlier passage according to Saint Luke, and one that transports us nine months back—in the Church Year to March 25: “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

*Continued Page 5*

# Prayer List

(UPDATED 10-21)

**Prizsts:** Anthony Spenglar, John Kuchta, James Gleason (*Fr.'s spiritual father*), \*Ted Bobosh, \*Moses Berry, \*John Magramm, \*John Matusiak, John Duranko, Lev Holowoty, \*Anastassy Fehr, \*Daniel Rental, \*Leonid Kishkovsky

**Deacons:** \*Theophan Warren / **Matushka:** \*Elaine Rental, Kristy Lollar & her unborn child, Ksenia & newborn baby Ileana baby, \*Carol Janacek, Pani Patricia Duranko / **Parishioners:** Karen Muzyka, Mark Hruban, Ronald Stachowiak, Rebecca Eggers, Jason Kirnbauer, Sonja Harris

**Parishioner's Friends / Family:** Donna Parhas (*Nick's Cousin*), Ron (*Mark's Friend*), Mary Ann Magerko, John Magerko, Helen Pender (*Fr.'s God-mother*), Stephen Holly (*Fr.'s cousin*), George Cavaligos (*Nick's brother*), Christos Parhas (*Nick's cousin*), Constantine Cavaligos (*Nick's dad*), John Hartel (*Joann's Step-dad*), Sandra (*Karen's sister*), Catherine McGurk (*Laura's mom*), Erika Northrup, Walter Litzie (*Fr.'s cousin*), Danielle Krush, Mark Svava, Arlene Tilghman, Linda Davik, Mary Northrup, Sandra Leonchik, Dianne Northrup, Raymond Northrup, Joey Krush, Carol Bregin (*Friend of Lynn*), Ann Lazo (*Friend of Lynn*), George Lazo (*Friend of Lynn*), Bruce (*Fr. Kurt's brother*), Christine & her unborn baby, \* Maria Sokolova & her 3 unborn babies, Chrissy Marron, Bernice McGurk (*Laura Grabavoy's grandmother*), Kelly Flynn, Baby Faith, Daniel Tiani (*friend of Becky Eggers*), Vivian (*friend of Becky Eggers*), Tim Kendra (*Rich Wolfe's father*).

**Other Requests:** Lucille (*Duke*), Dianne (*Bill Rudolph*), Elizabeth Lilos, Jemsey Pradun, Mae Joanna Bass, Hermenegil (*Neighbor*), Lidiya (*Neighbor*), Cathleen Rebollar, Patricia Schuster, \*Maria Sokolova & her 3 unborn babies, \*Barbara Pawlack, \*John Sedor

**Military:** Amber, Caleb, Nicholas, David, Timothy, Robert, Kristen, Matthew, Brian, Daniel, Joseph, Joseph (*Fr.'s cousin*)

**Captives:** Metropolitan Paul (*Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo*), Archbishop John (*Syriac Archdiocese of Aleppo*)

For the UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers in & around Syria / Those suffering persecution in Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and throughout the world / Those held captive throughout the world.

Additions or removals from the list? Please notify Fr. Andrew. (**\*Bishop Request**) Add: Bernice, Kelly Flynn, baby Faith, Daniel Tiani, Vivian / Coming Off: Matt Jakobski, Arlene Tilghman

## ***The Nativity Icon Continued***

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.' And Mary said to the angel, 'How shall this be, since I have no husband?' And the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.' And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word'" (Luke 1:26-38).

This great promise to a young, holy Virgin is today fulfilled. On March 25, we celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary. On December 25, we celebrate His manifestation in the Flesh to the world. The latter—the feast at hand—is in Greek called the *Genesis* of the Lord: the beginning of Jesus! The former, the feast of nine months ago: the *Evangelism* of the Theotokos!

Good News. Glad Tidings. Born to us is the Savior of the World, Whose divine mission is to enter the darkness of the world, at the darkest time of the year, in the midst of the darkness of human sin as the Light of the World, the Peace of the World, the Savior of the World. As we sing, "The magi saw, and worshipped. The angels beheld, and sang the Glory of the Lord. Joseph remained faithful to the prompting of the Lord. Angels evangelized. Shepherds, receiving that message likewise announced what they had seen and heard."

Can we, for whom Christ was born, do any differently?

# J A N U A R Y

HAPPY BIRTHDAY		HAPPY NAME DAY
5- Karina Posada 17- Natalie Northrup 24- Becky Eggers	8- Susie Joynt 21-Alex Posada	2- The Retired Right Rev. Seraphim of Sendai 19- The Retired Right Rev. Mark of Boston 24- The Right Rev. Daniel (Bishop of Dsanta Rosa)

*If there are those names to be added or removed, please contact Fr. Andrew. He would like to list all members of your family Orthodox and non-Orthodox.*

## In blessed repose: J A N U A R Y

1-Anna Wojciechowski (00) 2- Fr. Richard Everman (07) 4- George Bartek (83) 12- Adam Kuzmich (98) 13- Joseph Bloschynsky (00) 14- Joseph Dubovik (99) 14- Dorothy Michaluk (08) 16- Theodore Grabavoy (89) 22- Anna Grabavoy (77) 24- Helen Dubovik (11)	26- Jacqueline Marie Hansen (08) 29- John Mahalko (90) 29- Olga V Foraker (05)  1938: Anisia Sloboda Theodore Kozliak Peter Begal	1939: Michael Blarzko Ivan Yakel
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*Remember those who have gone before us in prayer. If there is a name missing from the above list, please speak to Fr. Andrew to have them added.*



**Bulletin Sponsor:** Would you be interested in being a bulletin sponsor in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one or friend? Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Services for that month. Donation: \$40 for the month.

**Memorial Candle(s):** *(Give names to Fr. Andrew)*

Option 1: The Tray of Candles under the Cross is now the area of remembrance for the deceased. If you would like the tray of candles placed in memory of a deceased loved one, the suggested donation is \$30. The Sponsors will be remembered during the Divine Services for that Sunday.

Option 2: One of the Tray's under the Theotokos in the back of the Church. Donation \$20

Option 3: If this tray is full, one or more candles may be gotten at the candle desk & be placed in the sand box.

**Candles for the Health of a Loved One** *(Speak to Fr. Andrew to make arrangements)*

Option 1: One of The tray's of 40 candles in front of the icon of woman saints in the back of the Church - donation \$25.

Option 2: The altar candles in the Sanctuary & Eternal Light candle - donation \$20.

Option 3: If Candles are filled more candles may be gotten at the candle desk & placed in the sand box.

**Monthly Panachida Service:** The third Sunday of each month there will be a Panachida. If you would like your loved one(s) to be remembered, please give a list of names to Fr. Andrew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month. If there is a major remembrance (newly departed or 40<sup>th</sup> day remembrance) we will remember them on the closest Sunday otherwise they will be remembered on the third Sunday.

**Hospitalization/Shut-ins:** If anyone goes into hospital, or is a shut-in, please let Fr. Andrew know as soon as possible so he can attend to them and their family members.

**Celebration? Achievement?:** Your spiritual family would like to share in your achievement, celebration, and accomplishment. Send in a picture or email to Fr. Andrew, by Wednesday @ 5:00 pm so he can place it in the bulletin!

## Assembly of Bishops issues Nativity Message

*The Nativity Message of the Chairman of the [Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America](#), His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of the [Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America](#), was recently released. The text appears below.*

### **2015 Nativity Message Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA**

*For the Lord your God is God of Gods and the Lord of Lords.... He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing [Reading from Great Vespers of the Nativity, Deuteronomy 10:17-18].*

To the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Members of Philanthropic Organizations, the Youth and Youth Workers, and the entire Orthodox Christian Family of the United States of America,

Beloved Faithful Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On these most blessed days of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are all invited to consider how we may manifest among our neighbors the love, mercy and compassion of the Christ-child. This is especially important because Christmas represents the profound and sacred point in history when the invisible God, taking the form of a servant, dwells among us. From this time forth the eternal message of salvation is not merely declared through law and prophetic message, but is finally something, as Saint John the Evangelist says, "that we have heard, that we have seen with our eyes, that we have looked at and touched with our hands [1 John 1: 1].

From this time forth, therefore, our actions are meant to reflect this tangible reality. Having heard, seen, and touched the Lord, we are called to share with the down-trodden and forgotten the same joy of the Incarnation. To do this, however, we must move beyond selfish endeavors and turn to the needs of others.

Certainly, many have contributed significantly to the Church's evangelism and outreach ministries on parish, diocesan, and jurisdictional levels. These initiatives, however, must never be viewed apart from national and global humanitarian efforts. Through our Assembly of Bishops, we have the unique blessing to participate in the work of our agencies, and thereby become agents of the Holy Gospel in more dynamic ways than ever

before. As you and your loved ones prepare to celebrate the holy feast of the Nativity, I encourage you to learn how IOCC responds to national and global humanitarian crises; how OCMC brings the good news of the Holy Gospel to all corners of the world; how OCPM cares for and offers hope to those in prisons; how OCN introduces people to Orthodoxy through digital media; and how OCF cultivates the minds and hearts of our young people on college campuses.

During the Christmas season, which is marked by an increase in God's grace upon us, we are called to serve as the all-merciful hands of God in the world. From the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus Christ is approached by countless people who are suffering and in desperate need of help, and in every such instance, Christ has compassion on them. In like fashion, we must feed the countless men, women and children who go to sleep on empty stomachs; provide shelter to the homeless; and visit our neighbors in prisons and hospitals.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, as we prepare to receive the Incarnate Lord into the world and into our lives, let us keep in mind that the light of Bethlehem and the joy of the manger of the Nativity are meant to be witnessed and experienced by all of humanity and not just a select few. During this blessed period, I extend to you the blessings of all brother Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. We wholeheartedly pray that the compassion and mercy of our Lord may be bestowed upon you and your families.

With paternal love in Christ,  
+ Archbishop Demetrios of America, Chairman  
Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States  
of America

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### **This Year is 2016 or according to Tradition, the Year 7524 from the Creation of the World *THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST***

The eighth day following His birth, the Divine Child was presented in the Temple and circumcised according to the Law existing in Israel since the time of Abraham. On this occasion, He was given the name Jesus, which the Archangel Gabriel announced to the All-Holy Virgin Mary. The Old Testament circumcision was the proto-type of the New Testament baptism. The circumcision of our Lord shows that He received upon Himself the true body of man and not just seemingly, as was later taught of Him by heretics. Our Lord was also circumcised because He wanted to fulfill the entire Law which He Himself gave through the prophets and forefathers. In fulfilling the written Law, He replaced it with Baptism in His Holy Church as was proclaimed by the Apostle Paul: "For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation" (Galatians 6:15). (In the cycle of the liturgical calendar of the Church, this Feast of the Lord's Circumcision, has either a forefeast or antefeast.

## On Inattention During the Divine Services

*Fr. Aidan Wilcoxson*

One of the things that folks often mention when they're making their confession is inattention during the divine services. So, I thought I would use this column to talk about that important subject. If we want to be focused during the services, one thing we can do is prepare adequately. And even if we can't do all the prayers that the Church encourages us to do leading up to the Divine Liturgy, we can at least avoid over-stimulation from media. For example, if we stay up late Saturday night to watch an exciting movie and then read the paper or check out our favorite web-sites before we leave for Church—and then listen to music or text our friends right up to the very moment that we get out of the car and walk into the nave, then we'll probably spend most of the Liturgy processing all those experiences and all that information instead of attending to what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are trying to say to us. Another thing we can do is spend more time in the Divine Services. In fact, one of the main reasons why our services are so long is because the Church understands that it takes most of us a good while just to relax and calm down before we can ever get around to actually praying. A good rule of thumb that works for most people is one hour in the Divine Services equals about two minutes of genuine interaction with the Most Holy Trinity. Of course, that two minutes can be life changing and world-changing. However, if we never actually spend a full hour in the Divine Services, then we'll never experience that two minutes of authentic prayer. So, the more time we invest in the services, the more Focused we will be.

But what if you have an infant or a small child, and you're constantly in and out during the Divine Liturgy? What if you are an usher or a chanter or you sing in the choir? Does that mean that you're never going to be able to really communicate with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Of course not, because there is a special grace that accompanies each of those roles. Folks who are raising young children or helping with the service are performing important tasks, and the Most Holy Trinity is going to make sure that they get what they need while they are doing their jobs. But we're not going to receive any special grace if we just wander in and out of the nave because we're bored or because we don't like to be still.

Still another thing we can do to stay focused during the services is to be honest about who we are. For example, if we are concerned about our health or stressed about our job or anxious about a family situation, it's not going to do any good at all to pretend like we're not thinking about those issues. But rather than just obsess over

those things, we should turn them into prayers. And there are lots of ways to do that: we can light a candle for each of those problems when we first go into the nave; we can make the sign of the cross or make a metania (bow) every time one of those subjects pops up in our mind; we can touch the priest's vestments during the Great Entrance and attach all those topics to his intercessions; we can raise all of those issues up to the Most Holy Trinity when the deacon elevates the Holy Gifts over the altar. It may take quite a while and a lot of effort, but, eventually, we will clear all that stuff out of our hearts, and then we will be able to hear what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are saying to us.

Worship is hard work—there's no doubt about it. But it is the most important work that we do all week long, because it's how we are getting closer to the Most Holy Trinity, it's how the people we love are going to get closer to the Most Holy Trinity, and it's how this world is being transformed through the love of the Most Holy Trinity. And the more attentive we are during at that work, the more those incredibly important goals will be realized.



### THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST (HOLY THEOPHANY) 6/19 JANUARY

About the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, John the Forerunner, who was some six months older than Our Saviour according to the flesh, and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then our Saviour also came from Galilee to the Jordan, and sought and received baptism though He was the Master and John was but a servant. Whereupon, there came to pass those marvellous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized and the voice was heard from the Heavens hearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22). From these events the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," that is, the divine manifestation, God's appearance among men. On this venerable day the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth also began the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens.