



***The Sunday before
Theophany***

***Troparion of the Resurrec-
tion, Tone 3***

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the firstborn of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world great mercy!

***Troparion of the Annuncia-
tion Tone 4***

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

***Kontakion of the Annuncia-
tion, Tone 8***

O Victorious Leader of triumphant hosts! We, your servants delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos! As you possess invincible might set us free from every calamity so that we may sing: Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!

Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

January 2nd , Tone 3, Mark 1:1-8

Theophany is understood as a feast in which the event of the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan is commemorated and glorified (Mt. 3:13-17. Mk. 1:9-11. Lk. 3:21-22). This feast is called Theophany because during the baptism of the Lord the Divine, All-holy Trinity was revealed: God the Father spoke from heaven about the Son, the Son of God was baptized by John and was witnessed by God the Father, and the Holy Spirit descended on the Son in the form of a dove.

This explanation of the feast is given by the Holy Church in its troparion: "When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan"... Since ancient times this feast also was known as the day of illumination and the feast of lights because God is the light and reveals Himself to illumine "those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death" (Mt. 4:16) and to save according to grace, who has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior" (2 Tim. 1:9-10) and because on the Eve of Theophany it was the custom to baptize the catechumens, which actually is spiritual illumination and during which many lamps are lit...

The Lord, according to the teaching of St. John of Damascus, was baptized not because He Himself needed cleansing, but in order, having taken our cleansing upon Himself, to destroy the heads of the serpents in the water, "to bury human sin through water" and all of the old Adam, to fulfill the law, to open the mystery of the Trinity and, finally, to consecrate "the essence of water" and to grant us a paradigm and an example of baptism.

Therefore the Holy Church, celebrating the baptism of the Lord, confirms our faith in the highest, incomprehensible mystery of the Three Persons in one Godhead and teaches us with equal honor to profess and glorify the Holy Trinity, One in Essence and Undivided; accuses and destroys the errors of the ancient false teachers: Patripassians or Sabellians, Arians, Macedonians and others who rejected the triunity of Persons in one Godhead, together with those false teachers who taught the human nature of the Son of God was a phantom; shows the necessity of baptism for the believers in Christ, inspires in us feelings of boundless gratitude to the Enlightener and the Cleanser of our sinful nature, teaches that our purification and salvation from sin is only by the power of grace of the Holy Spirit, and, specifying the necessity of the worthy use the gifts of grace of baptism and the protection in purity of those precious garments of which we are reminded on the feast of the Baptism by the words: "as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), commands us the purification of our souls and hearts in order to be worthy of the blessed life ...Theophany arose in apostolic times. It is mentioned in the Apostolic Constitutions, and from the 2nd century the witness of Clement of Alexandria about the

Christ is Born! Glorify Him Announcements and Activities

Great Blessing of Water— will be celebrated at 11AM on Wednesday, Jan. 5th. It will not be attached, as it generally is, to the morning celebration of the Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil, but is being served separately this year. Those who are able may come for this short service, or you may take your vessel to fill with the newly blessed Holy Water at the evening service of the Vigil.

Vigil for Theophany— Wednesday, at 6:30 PM. Those who are able should be present for the Theophany cycle. The three feasts—Christmas, Theophany and Pascha—certainly belong together in our experience of the Orthodox Faith. They are the essential components of our liturgical spirituality in the annual celebration of the mighty acts of God in Christ. "Come and drink" of the new waters of salvation.

Liturgy of Theophany— 9AM, Thursday, the 6th.

House Blessings— will begin the evening of January 6th. Fr. Lawrence will place a sign-up sheet for House Blessings in the Social Hall. If you're interested in Father and Matushka dining with you or having refreshments, you should probably add a second hour to the time you choose. You'll recall that we did not have House Blessings last year. There are, of course, still concerns about the new Omicron variant. If you would prefer to not have Fr. Lawrence come for now, he understands, and will gladly do it at another time when you feel more comfortable. We will need to be somewhat cautious with our schedules, as we do not want to have to close the church down from an outbreak of Covid. If anyone in the household is sick with a fever, just call Fr. Lawrence and we'll reschedule; better than than having to close the parish for two weeks, under His Eminence's guidelines. If Fr. Lawrence falls ill, he will, of course, cancel and reschedule with you by phone. Our goal is, as always, to finish House Blessings before the start of Great Lent.

Saturday Great Vespers— on Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Church School/Adult Ed.— will meet next Sunday, January 9th, at 9AM.

Sunday Divine Liturgy— 10AM.

Coffee Hours— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Madeline and Jason and Michael M. Next week's Coffee Hour will be our bagels and Coffee Week.

Annual Meeting— I want to get a one week jump on the mandatory 3 Sundays of announcing the upcoming Annual Meeting. Last year we were outside in the wind. Depending on weather—we'll see—my thought is that we can do a potluck outside and meet inside wearing our masks. We need all members to come to this meeting, as we need a larger quorum to enact some revisions to our Bylaws that were set in motion by the Adoption of Standard Diocesan Bylaws at the Diocesan Assembly last October. Voting Members are defined in our Bylaws as those parishioners 18 years of age, have been to Confession and Communion at least once in the last 12 months and have supported the parish with Time, Talent and Resources, as they are able. Catechumens and friends of the parish may come and participate as observers.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)—battling cancer. Samir's friend, Johnny, who has been improving in the battle to save his sight. Brian, Sunday's brother. George and Alex, health problems. All those who have lost their lives or are suffering as a result of the cur-

celebration of the Baptism of the Lord and doing the night vigil, spent reading the Holy Scripture before this feast; in the 3rd century the Holy Martyr Hippolytus and Gregory of Neocaesarea; in the 4th century, the Holy Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, Augustine and many others talked about the event of Holy Theophany during the divine service for this feast; the Fathers of the Church: of the 5th century: Anatolius of Constantinople, of the 7th century: Andrew and Sophronius of Jerusalem; of the 8th century: Cosmas of Maium, John of Damascus and Germanus of Constantinople; of the 9th century, Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzas deposited many church hymns for this feast, that up to now are sung by the Church...

(taken from *The Server's Handbook*, by Bulgakov)

From the Lives of the Saints... SAINT SYLVESTER, BISHOP OF ROME

Sylvester was born in Rome, and from his early youth was learned in worldly wisdom and in the Faith of Christ. He always conducted his life according to the Gospel commandments. He benefited much from the instruction of Timothy the priest, whose death for the Faith Sylvester himself witnessed. Observing the example of the heroic sacrifice of his teacher, he was imbued with just such a spirit throughout his entire life. Becoming Bishop of Rome at age thirty, he reformed certain Christian customs. For example, he dispensed with the fast on Saturdays, which had been practiced by many Christians up to that time, and ordered that fasting be observed only on Holy and Great Saturday, as well as on those Saturdays that fall within the fasting seasons. By his prayers and miracles, Sylvester assisted in bringing Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena to the true Faith and baptism. With the Empress Helena he took part in finding the Honorable Cross. He governed the Church of God for twenty years. His earthly life ended honorably and he entered into the Heavenly Kingdom.

THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV

Seraphim was one of the greatest Russian ascetics, clairvoyant elders and miracle-workers. He was born in 1759 A.D. and he reposed in 1833 A.D. Seraphim was distinguished by great humility. When the entire world praised him, he referred to himself as "the wretched Seraphim."

SAINT THEODOTA

Theodota was the mother of the brothers Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary and Miracle-workers. Theodota lived a God-pleasing life and in such a life she instructed her sons.

THE VENERABLE AMMON

Ammon was a great ascetic of the fifth century. He was the abbot of the Tabennisiot Monastery in Upper Egypt. Three thousand monks lived the ascetic life under his direction. He possessed the grace-filled gifts of miracle-working and clairvoyance. When a monk once asked him for advice, he said to him, "Be like a convict in prison, as he continually asks, 'When will the judge come?'" So also should

Prologue of Ochrid, edited and written by St. Nikolai

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)