

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

January 2019 – Holy Theophany

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine “those who sat in darkness,” and “in the region of the shadow of death” (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace. In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast. There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the 4th to 9th century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian,



John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but “to bury human sin by water,” to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify “the nature of water” and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms. The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday. (*from oca.org*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7

My son Titus, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.



Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 3:13-17

At that time, Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John *tried to* prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Come, and with the feet of thought let us make for the Jordan, and see John the Baptist as he baptizes One who needs no baptism, and yet submits to the rite in order that He may bestow freely upon us the grace of baptism. Come, let us view the image of our regeneration, as it is emblematically presented in these waters. "Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." O how vast is the humility of the Lord! O how vast His condescension! The King of the heavens hastened to John, His own forerunner, without setting in motion the camps of His angels, without dispatching beforehand the incorporeal powers as His precursors; but presenting Himself in utmost simplicity, in soldier-like form, He comes up to His own subaltern. And He approached him as one of the multitude, and humbled Himself among the captives though He was the Redeemer, and ranged Himself with those under judgment though He was the Judge, and joined Himself with the lost sheep though He was the Good Shepherd who on account of the straying sheep came down from heaven, and yet did not forsake His heavens, and was mingled with the tares though He was that heavenly grain that springs unsown.

And when the Baptist John then saw Him, recognizing Him whom before in his mother's womb he had recognized and worshipped, and discerning clearly that this was He on whose account, in a manner surpassing the natural time, he had leaped in the womb of his mother. ...bowing his head like a servant full of love to his master, he addressed Him in these words: “I have need to be baptized by You, and You come to me? What is this you are doing, my Lord? Why do You reverse the order of things? Why do You seek along with the servants, at the hand of Your servant, the things that are proper to servants? Why do You desire to receive what You require not? Why do You burden me, Your servitor, with Your mighty condescension?”

“I have need to be baptized by You, but You have no need to be baptized of me. The less is blessed by the greater, and the greater is not blessed and sanctified by

the less. The light is kindled by the sun, and the sun is not made to shine by the rush-lamp. The clay is wrought by the potter, and the potter is not molded by the clay. The creature is made anew by the Creator, and the Creator is not restored by the creature. The infirm is healed by the physician, and the physician is not cured by the infirm. The poor man receives contributions from the rich, and the rich borrow not from the poor.”

“I have need to be baptized by You, and You come to me? Can I be ignorant who You are, and from what source You have Your light, and whence You have come? Or, because You have been born even as I have been, am I, then, to deny the greatness of Your divinity? Or, because You have condescended so far to me as to have approached my body, and bear me wholly in Yourself in order to effect the salvation of the whole man, am I, on account of that body of Yours which is seen, to overlook that divinity of Yours which is only apprehended? Or, because on behalf of my salvation You have taken to Yourself the offering of my first-fruits, am I to ignore the fact that "You cover Yourself with light as with a garment?" Or, because You wear the flesh that is related to me, and show Yourself to men as they are able to see You, am I to forget the brightness of Your glorious divinity? Or, because I see my own form in You, am I to reason against Your divine substance, which is invisible and incomprehensible?” “I know You, O Lord; I know You clearly. I know You, since I have been taught by You; for no one can recognize You, unless He enjoys Your illumination. I know You, O Lord, clearly; for I saw You spiritually before I beheld this light. When You were altogether in the incorporeal bosom of the heavenly Father, You were also altogether in the womb of Your handmaid and mother; and I though held in the womb of Elisabeth by nature as in a prison, and bound with the indissoluble bonds of the children unborn, leaped and celebrated Your birth with anticipative rejoicings. Shall I then, who gave intimation of Your sojourn on earth before Your birth, fail to apprehend Your coming after Your birth? Shall I, who in the womb was a teacher of Your coming, be now a child in understanding in view of perfect knowledge?” “But I cannot but worship You, who art adored by the whole creation; I cannot but proclaim You, of whom heaven gave the indication by the star, and for whom earth offered a kind reception by the wise men, while the choirs of angels also praised You in joy over Your condescension to us, and the shepherds who kept watch by night hymned You as the Chief Shepherd of the rational sheep. I cannot keep silence while You are present, for I am a voice; yea, I am the voice, as it is said, of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’.”

“I have need to be baptized by You, and You come to me? I was born, and thereby removed the barrenness of the mother that bore me; and while still a babe I became the healer of my father's speechlessness, having received of You from my

childhood the gift of the miraculous. “But You, being born of the Virgin Mary, as You willed, and as You alone know, did not do away with her virginity; but You kept it, and simply gifted her with the name of mother: and neither did her virginity preclude Your birth, nor did Your birth injure her virginity. But these two things, so utterly opposite—bearing and virginity—harmonized with one intent; for such a thing abides, possible with You, the Framer of nature. I am, but a man, and am a partaker of the divine grace; but You are God, and also man to the same effect: for You are by nature man's friend.”

“I have need to be baptized by You, and You come to me? You who were in the beginning, and was with God, and was God; You who are the brightness of the Father's glory; You who are the perfect image of the perfect Father; You who are the true light that lightens every man that comes into the world; You who were in the world, and came where You were; You who were made flesh, and yet was not changed into the flesh; You who dwelt among us, and manifested Yourself to Your servants in the form of a servant; You who bridged earth and heaven together by Your holy name,—You come to me? One so great to such a one as I am? The King to the forerunner? The Lord to the servant? But though You were not ashamed to be born in the lowly measures of humanity, yet I have no ability to pass the measures of nature. I know how great is the measure of difference between earth and the Creator. I know how great is the distinction between the clay and the potter. I know how vast is the superiority possessed by You, who art the Sun of righteousness, over me who am but the torch of Your grace. Even though You are compassed with the pure cloud of the body, I can still recognize Your lordship. I acknowledge my own servitude, I proclaim Your glorious greatness, I recognize Your perfect lordship, I recognize my own perfect insignificance, I am not worthy to unloose the latchets of Your shoes; and how shall I dare to touch Your stainless head? How can I stretch out the right hand upon You, who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, and set the earth above the waters? How shall I spread those menial hands of mine upon Your head? How shall I wash You, who art undefiled and sinless? How shall I enlighten the light? What manner of prayer shall I offer up over You, who receives the prayers even of those who are ignorant of You?”

“When I baptize others, I baptize into Your name, in order that they may believe in You, who comes with glory; but when I baptize You, of whom shall I make mention? And into whose name shall I baptize You? Into that of the Father? But You have the Father altogether in Yourself, and You are altogether in the Father. Or into that of the Son? But beside You there is no other Son of God by nature. Or into that of the Holy Spirit? But He is ever together with You, as being of one

substance, and of one will, and of one judgment, and of one power, and of one honor with You; and He receives, I along with You, the same adoration from all.”

Therefore, O Lord, baptize me, if You please; baptize me, the Baptist. Regenerate one whom You caused to be generated. I Extend Your dread right hand, which You have prepared for Yourself, and crown my head by Your touch, in order that I may run the course before Your kingdom, crowned like a forerunner, and diligently announce the good tidings to the sinners, addressing them with this earnest call: "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!" O river Jordan, accompany me in the joyous choir, and leap with me, and stir your waters rhythmically, as in the movements of the dance; for your Maker stands by you in the body. Once of old you saw Israel pass through you, and you divided your floods, and waited in expectation of the passage of the people; but now divide yourself more decidedly, and flow more easily, and embrace the stainless limbs of Him who at that ancient time did convey the Jews through you. You mountains and hills, you valleys and torrents, you seas and rivers, bless the Lord, who has come upon the river Jordan; for through these streams He transmits sanctification to all streams.”

And Jesus answered and said to him: “Allow it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. Allow it to be so now; grant the favor of silence, O Baptist, to the season of my economy. Learn to will whatever is my will.... Permit me to fulfil the object for which I have come to earth.... There is a mystery here, not for the fulfilling of my own need, but for the designing of a remedy for those who have been wounded. There is a mystery, which gives in these waters the representation of the heavenly streams of the regeneration of men. Allow it to be so now: when you see me doing what seems to me good among the works of my hands, in a manner befitting divinity, then attune your praises to the acts accomplished. When you see me cleansing the lepers, then proclaim me as the framer of nature. When you see me make the lame ready runners, then with quickened pace do thou also prepare your tongue to praise me. When you see me cast out demons, then hail my kingdom with adoration. When you see me raise the dead from their graves by my word, then, in concert with those thus raised, glorify me as the Prince of Life. When you see me on the Father's right hand, then acknowledge me to be divine, as the equal of the Father and the Holy Spirit, on the throne, and in eternity, and in honor.”

“Allow it to be so now; for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. I am the Lawgiver, and the Son of the Lawgiver; and it becomes me first to pass through all that is established, and then to set forth everywhere the intimations of my free gift. It becomes me to fulfil the law, and then to bestow grace. It becomes me to adduce the shadow, and then the reality. It becomes me to finish the old covenant, and

then to dictate the new, and to write it on the hearts of men, and to subscribe it with my blood, and to seal it with my Spirit. It becomes me to ascend the cross, and to be pierced with its nails, and to suffer after the manner of that nature which is capable of suffering, and to heal sufferings by my suffering, and by the tree to cure the wound that was inflicted upon men by the medium of a tree. It becomes me to descend even into the very depths of the grave, on behalf of the dead who are detained there. It becomes me, by my three days' dissolution in the flesh, to destroy the power of the ancient enemy, death. It becomes me to kindle the torch of my body for those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. It becomes me to ascend in the flesh to that place where I am in my divinity. It becomes me to introduce to the Father the Adam reigning in me. It becomes me to accomplish these things, for on account of these things I have taken my position with the works of my hands. It becomes me to be baptized with this baptism for the present, and afterwards to bestow the baptism of the consubstantial Trinity upon all men.”

“Lend me, therefore, O Baptist, your right hand for the present economy, even as Mary lent her womb for my birth. Immerse me in the streams of Jordan, even as she who bore me wrapped me in children's swaddling-clothes. Grant me your baptism even as the Virgin granted me her milk. Lay hold of this head of mine, which the seraphim revere. With your right hand lay hold of this head, that is related to yourself in kinship. Lay hold of this head, which nature has made to be touched. Lay hold of this head, which for this very purpose has been formed by myself and my Father.

“Lay hold of this head of mine, which, if one does lay hold of it in piety, will save him from ever suffering shipwreck. Baptize me, who am destined to baptize those who believe in me with water, and with the Spirit, and with fire: with water, capable of washing away the defilement of sins; with the Spirit, capable of making the earthly spiritual; with fire, naturally fitted to consume the thorns of transgressions.”

On hearing these words, the Baptist directed his mind to the object of the salvation, and comprehended the mystery which he had received, and discharged the divine command; for he was at once pious and ready to obey. And stretching forth slowly his right hand, which seemed both to tremble and to rejoice, he baptized the Lord. Then the Jews who were present, with those in the vicinity and those from a distance, reasoned together, and spoke thus with themselves and with each other: “Was it, then, without cause that we imagined John to be superior to Jesus? Was it without cause that we considered the former to be greater than the latter? Does not this very baptism attest the Baptist's pre-eminence? Is not he who baptizes presented as the superior, and he who is baptized as the inferior?”

...He who alone knows perfectly Him whom He alone in passionless fashion begot, to correct the erroneous imaginations of the Jews, opened the gates of the heavens, and sent down the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, lighting upon the head of Jesus, pointing out thereby the new Noah...the good pilot of the nature which is in shipwreck. And He Himself calls with clear voice out of heaven, and says: "This is my beloved Son", —the Jesus there, namely, and not the John; the one baptized, and not the one baptizing; He who was begotten of me before all periods of time and not he who was begotten of Zacharias; He who was born of Mary after the flesh, and not he who was brought forth by Elisabeth beyond all expectation; He who was the fruit of the virginity yet preserved intact, and not he who was the shoot from a sterility removed; He who has had His conversation with you, and not he who was brought up in the wilderness.

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased": my Son, of the same substance with myself, and not of a different; of one substance with me according to what is unseen, and of one substance with you according to what is seen, yet without sin. This is He who along with me made man. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This Son of mine and this son of Mary are not two distinct persons; but this is my beloved Son,—this one who is both seen with the eye and apprehended with the mind. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" hear Him. If He shall say, I and my Father are one, hear Him. If He shall say, He that has seen me has seen the Father, hear Him. If He shall say, He that has sent me is greater than I, adapt the voice to the economy. If He shall say, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? answer Him thus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. By these words, as they were sent from the Father out of heaven in thunder-form, the race of men was enlightened: they apprehended the difference between the Creator and the creature, between the King and the soldier (subject), between the Worker and the work; and being strengthened in faith, they drew near through the baptism of John to Christ, our true God, who baptizes with the Spirit and with fire. To Him be glory, and to the Father, and to the most holy and quickening Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of the ages. Amen.

— St. Gregory the Wonderworker, *Homily on Holy Theophany*

December Treasurer's Report

Glory to Jesus Christ! For the last month of 2018, we had an operating income of \$12,655 and expenses of \$10,500. Major expenses included our first fill of the season of fuel oil, and a high electric bill due to the winter months. We were able to give over \$640 towards charitable works in December, and an additional \$580 towards our primary mortgage. Please come to the Parish meeting on January 13th to see the year-end totals for 2018 and to vote on the 2019 budget! Thank you again for your generous giving towards our Parish mission! In Christ, Josh Moore, Treasurer



Office of the Bishop

*312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906*

December 19, 2018

Protocol No. 23/2018

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Diocesan Parents and Children,

Our Diocese is pleased to offer our seventh annual Family Camp at Camp Nazareth this year in conjunction with Family Day. The event is exactly what it sounds like. Families “camping” together in the Camp cabins and participating in a weekend of services, games, discussions, activities and challenges that are all designed to help families deepen their relationship with God and with one another.

Last year we had a wonderful time together (as we always do!) and we are looking forward to being together again this year. We know our families need support and help, especially in this day and age. Here is an event to support and sustain our families as we continue to develop our own Diocesan Family Ministry.

Family Camp is scheduled for Friday, May 31 – Sunday, June 2, 2019.

Families can register online at campnazareth.org. The Flyer and Schedule are also available at campnazareth.org.

We have planned a variety of activities and events that will allow your family the opportunity to learn together, have fun together, pray together and simply be together in the peaceful environment of the Camp. Families will be staying together, and have to themselves a Camp cabin; plenty of space to rest and relax and simply be together during and after the weekend’s festivities.

Don’t miss out on this opportunity for you and your family. Come and help us to make this an ongoing and rewarding event for our Diocesan families. Space is limited to the first 10 families, so register online soon. Registration closes after Friday, May 24, 2019.

With blessing I remain

Working in His Vineyard,

+Metropolitan Gregory

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Upcoming Events

- ❖ The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Jan 13th after Liturgy, from noon until 2 pm. All are welcome and encouraged to come! The more perspectives and voices we can have the better. The primary order of business is to approve the church's 2019 budget and to elect Parish Council officers. For official votes, only those who are considered voting members of the church can vote, but anyone can come to participate in the meeting. See you on Sunday, Jan 13th!
- ❖ January 18, 2019 is the annual March for Life in Washington, DC and St. Thomas has a long history of participation. Meet behind the Orthodox for Life banner.

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)