

# 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**

**Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**

## **January 5, 2020 – Sunday Before Theophany | Eve of Theophany | Hieromartyr Theopemptus, Bp. of Nicodemia**

The Eve of Theophany anticipates the feast. Through the hymns and the readings of the Eve in the Royal Hours, Vespers and the Liturgy, the Church presents from both testaments of the Holy Scripture everything from the Old Testament prototypes and prophecies concerning baptism, the very existence of baptism and its fruits. Psalms 31 and 26 of the 1st Hour present the Lord as the Pastor, Enlightener and Savior. The spiritual renewal of the faith in Jesus Christ is announced in the Paramoebas (Old Testament readings – Ed.) of the prophecies of the 1st hour. The Epistle and the Gospel tell about the Baptizer and Forerunner of the Lord who testifies about His eternal and divine greatness. Psalms 28 and 41 of the 3rd Hour describe the authority and the might of the Lord over water and all the elements of the world. In the Paramoebas we hear the Prophet Isaiah, who foresaw spiritual rebirth through baptism. The Epistle reading speaks about the distinction of John's baptism from the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the Gospel lesson about the Forerunner, who prepares the way of the Lord. Psalms 73 and 76 of the 6th Hour describe the divine greatness and omnipotence of the Lord. In the Paramoebas the Prophet Isaiah beholds the grace of the salvation in the waters of baptism and calls believers to make it their own. The Epistle lesson



Baptism of Our Lord

inspires those baptized in Christ Jesus to enter into the renewal of life. The Gospel announces the Theophany of the Holy Trinity at the baptism of the Savior, about His forty-day ascetic effort in the desert and the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel. Psalms 92 and 93 of the 9th Hour proclaim the royal greatness and omnipotence of the Lord. The Paramoegas of the prophecies describes the unspeakable mercy of God for the people and help full of grace opened to them in baptism. The Epistle lesson teaches about the appearance of the grace of God that saves all humanity, and the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit on believers. The Gospel narrates the baptism of the Savior and the Theophany. Thirteen Paramoegas are prescribed for Vespers.... As on the Eve whatever day of the week it falls, the Ustav (Rubrics) requires, for the sake of the blessing by sprinkling and the tasting of the holy water, a fast and the need to eat "scalded seeds (grain), or kutiya with honey," as this evening of the Baptism ordinarily is called Eve of Theophany or Christmas Eve.

The Ustav (Rubrics) says, that if the Eve falls on Saturday or Sunday that "there is no fast," should be understood in the sense of the simplification of the fast: that there is no fast as on the Eve if it falls on the other days of the week. Instead of once it is permitted to eat food twice, once after the liturgy and after the blessing of water.

If the Eve falls on Sunday the Royal Hours are served on the previous Friday. The Liturgy of St. Basil is done on the feast day. On the Eve of the feast, the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and at its own time (separately from the liturgy) Vespers is performed. Vespers with the reading of the Paramoegas, the Epistle, and the Gospel is served on the Eve before the Baptism. If the Eve of Theophany falls on Sunday: the Prokimenon, the Epistle, the Alleluia, and the Communion Hymn are for the Sunday before Theophany and then the rest according to the order."

On the Eve of the Theophany of the Lord in the temples "The Order for the Great Blessing of the Waters of Holy Theophany" is performed, which consists in remembering the prophecies concerning the event of Baptism (see the Paramoegas), the very event and its signs (see the Epistle and the Gospel), of the prayers of the blessing by God over the water and the infusion of the Holy Spirit in it for granting to it the power of cleansing and healing, from the triple blessings and the triple immersions of the cross in it, in the paradigm of the immersion of the Lord in the waters of the Jordan. The Blessing of the Water ends, on the one hand, with the clergy and all the people kissing the honorable cross and their sprinkling with holy water; on the other hand, by the invocation of the faithful to the great glory of the acts of God, manifested in the Baptism of the Lord and the blessing of water, and the final invitation to the use of this water for salvation: "for upon those that draw in faith, the grace of the Spirit is invisibly bestowed by Christ God and the Savior

of our souls." Done on the Eve of Theophany, the blessing of water serves as a memorial that in antiquity on the eve of Theophany the blessing of water for the baptism of the catechumens was performed, and is why it is done in the temples where the catechumens were baptized. This blessing of water is called great, in comparison with other blessings, called lesser (done on Aug. 1 and other days), because of the special solemnity of the rite, and the penetrating memory of the baptism of the Savior. The beginning of the custom to bless water on the eve of the feast coincides with the beginning of the feast itself. Tertullian and St. Cyprian already remember these things. The Apostolic Constitutions also contain prayers, said at the blessing of water. St. Epiphanius sees the beginning of the practice to draw a little water from the springs in memory of the miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee and this practice is called ancient. St. Basil the Great asks: "on what writings do we bless waters of baptism?" and he answers: "From the Apostolic Tradition on the succession of the mystery." St. John Chrysostom mentions the special property of the water blessed on this day, noticed already in the ancient church and accepted with faith even today, the property not to spoil with the duration of time and keeps completely fresh during the whole year and even two and three years. Christians since ancient times have great awe for the blessed water. The Orthodox Church calls the blessed water the great agiasmos (holy). The Church uses this holy water for the sprinkling of temples and homes. Pious Christians from of old also have the custom on the eve or on the feast of Baptism to draw a little of the blessed water for domestic use and to keep it over the holy icons.

The church hymns for this day have: "You have shown forth in the flesh from a Virgin in Bethlehem, now you hasten towards Jordan", "grant to all the faithful the salvation that comes through Baptism in Christ: for in this way it cleanses Adam, raises the fallen, humiliates the deposed torturer, opens the heavens, causes the Divine Spirit to descend, and grants incorruption to the communicants". "Let all the earth rejoice, let heaven be glad, let the world leap for joy, let the rivers clap their hands, let the springs and lakes and the deeps of the sea rejoice with them, for Christ is come to cleanse Adam", "Being Himself the Bestower of light, Jesus, not needing to be baptized, in the flesh descends into the stream of Jordan, wishing to enlighten those existing in darkness. Let us go fervently in faith to meet Him", "let us joyfully welcome Him with pure intention".

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"Protectors of piety", "firm battlers for the faith", "wise sufferers", the Holy Martyrs Theopemptus and Theonas both "rejected the filthy idolatrous flattery", their own torture, "and were brave before the lawless" were arrested during the persecution of Diocletian in year of 303 in Nicomedia. Theonas, a sorcerer, in

Christianity Sinesius, was called by Diocletian to humiliate Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia. He believed in Christ, after seeing that the poison prepared by him in the food for the Holy Bishop did not harm the hierarch at all. Torturers tried in every possible way to get them to renounce Christ; but "neither stroking, nor flattery, nor earthly glory could get them to renounce their faith". "The foreboding of the martyrs" and "the fury of the impious" was fruitless. They beheaded Theopemptus after much torture, and buried Theonas in the ground alive. (*adapted from Handbook for Church Servers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., by S. V. Bulgakov (Trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris)*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8**

My son Timothy, be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint 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 Your face, who will prepare Your way before You." "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.'" John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

The eyes of earth-born have strength to see the celestial figure. The eyes of men of clay have beheld the unbearable beam of the immaterial light. This the prophets and kings did not see, although they wished to. The great Daniel was called "a man of desire" because he wished to gaze at the One who beholds us. We are not

imagining things, for we live soberly; we are not of the night; but we see in the light of day the One made flesh, Who has appeared and illumined all things.

A new Heaven has appeared for us, and on it the God of all descends. The prophet has called the body of the Incorporeal One "heaven of Heaven," (Ps. 68:33) for even if He was born and wrapped in swaddling clothes, He is the blameless Heaven; for He is Heaven and not a celestial body for He was born of Mary, the Virgin, and united to God, we know not how. He is not outside the bosom of His Father but coexistent with Him. The One whom we adore is the Holy of holy ones, Who has appeared and illumined all things.

If only we understood the points of the opposition! We have nothing to do with what is beyond us. The Word is near us; and why should we seek to go far off to learn? In the faith we have what we desire; where are we to put the boundaries? The road is straight lest anyone lead us astray; Mary has shown us the path for she called her son Lord; her son was not merely her son, as we have been taught, but He was incarnated from her and from the Holy Spirit, He Who has appeared and illumined all things.

Exalt our horn, O Jesus, for we hold fast Your uncontaminated truths, proclaiming them in confidence: "God is with us, all you nations, understand." Indeed, as the prophet said: "The people shall see You and be in labor" (Hab. 3:10). Lo, we were in labor and we gave birth - we have made available for all the spirit of Your salvation, for on earth we talk of heavenly matters. All flesh has seen You, and still has flourished as before. Creation on seeing the Creator has been enlightened, He who appeared and illumined all things.

Now the garment of mourning is rent; we have put on the white robe which the spirit has woven for us from the lamb's fleece of our Lamb and our God; sin is taken away, and immortality is given us, our restoration is clear. The Forerunner has proclaimed it when he said: "Lo now, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of all the world." He has shown the paper of annulment for all those who are much in debt. He who leaped in his mother's womb has now heralded and made known the One Who appeared and illumined all things.

O, the message of the Baptist, and the mystery in it! He calls the shepherd lamb, and not only a lamb, but one to free us from mistakes. He showed the lawless that the (scape)goat which they sent into the desert was ineffective. "Lo," he said, "the lamb; there is no longer need of the goat; put your hands on Him, all of you who confess your sins, for He has come to take them away, those of the people and of the whole world." For lo, the One whom the Father has sent to us is the One who carries away evil, Who appeared and illumined all things.

Great mystery for Christians; there is no lack of witness in you. On all sides you have confirmation; you are made secure by all inspired scripture, all things witness to you: the law and the prophets, and especially the patriarchs. You are the salt of each generation, seasoning for the faithful the food which is incorruptible. If we eat it, we shall not die. You seasoned a dish for Isaac from which he loved to eat, and he blessed his son, symbolizing in his blessings the One who appeared and illumined all things.

Let us all raise our eyes to God in the heavens, crying as Jeremiah (Bar. 3:35-38) did: Our God is the One seen on earth; He voluntarily lived among men, and did not suffer change; He revealed Himself to the prophets in changed forms. Ezekiel observed Him in the form of a man on a fiery chariot; and Daniel saw Him as Son of God and ancient of days, old and young, as he proclaimed Him the Lord Who appeared and illumined all things.

He has caused gloomy night to disappear and revealed all as noon; Jesus, our Savior, has illumined the world with His light which knows no evening. The land of Zebulun in its abundance even imitates Eden, for the torrent of luxury waters it, and causes an ever-flowing spring to well up. The men of old did not find it when they dug the well of the oath, the well of Shebah, it was not a source of eternal life; in Galilee we behold the living water Who appeared and illumined all things.

I shall look to You, Jesus, to enlighten my thinking and to speak to my reasoning, "Come unto me and drink, you who always thirst" (John 7:37). Water your humility which your wandering has crushed. It has caused it to disappear through hunger and thirst, not hunger from a lack of food, nor thirst from a lack of water, but of hearing the words of the Spirit, for the Spirit does not find its master for either teaching or learning. Therefore it groans, concealing the judge who will reveal the One who has appeared and illumined all things.

I glorified in Your epiphany; grant me a clear sign; cleanse me from hidden sins, for my hidden wounds destroy me. In a way which cannot be discerned, send Your invisible salve for my hidden wound. I fall before You, Savior, as did the woman with the issue of blood, and touching the hem of Your garment, I say: "If only I touch You, I shall be saved." O Physician of souls, do not make my faith vain. As I uncover my suffering, I shall find for my salvation the One Who appeared and illumined all things.

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 6, On Epiphany*







# Orthodox Christians Walking Together at The March for Life

Friday, January 24, 2020  
The National Mall, Washington, DC

**Text "MARCHFORLIFE" to (844) 334-5548**

*to opt-in to receive texts for day-of updates on our gathering schedule & location*

Our Facebook Event Page will be kept up to date  
[Facebook.com/events/432441117439851/](https://www.facebook.com/events/432441117439851/)

## AGENDA - Friday, January 24

**8:30AM - 10/10:30AM** Pre-March Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral  
*Located: 3500 Massachusetts Ave NW DC*

**11:30AM** Meet at the National Mall at the intersection of 12<sup>th</sup> St NW & Madison Dr NW

- **EXACT detailed spot will be announced via text and Facebook**
- *May need to adjust to a nearby location (within 5 min walk) due to the nature of this event. Please opt-in for texting for real-time updates. You will also spot our signs there.*

**12PM - 1PM Pre-March Rally** His Grace Bishop Apostolos of Medeia will lead all in prayer on stage

**About 12:30/12:45** Orthodox faithful and hierarchs will gather for a brief prayer for the unborn

**1PM** March peacefully with hierarchs and clergy up Constitution Ave to US Supreme Court

**After March** Please join us for fellowship at St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral

**MESSAGE & FOLLOW US** [Facebook.com/OrthodoxMarchForLife/](https://www.facebook.com/OrthodoxMarchForLife/)

See official **March for Life website** for schedule, tips, and other info: [MarchForLife.org](https://www.marchforlife.org)

Please support  an Orthodox Christian Initiative ([ZoeForLife.org](https://www.ZoeForLife.org))  
*ZOE for Life!® affirms the value of all life by helping women in a confidential manner during and after crisis pregnancies*

For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. **Psalm 139:13**



## **Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the feast of Saint Basil & the New Year** **Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,**

on this first day of the year of our Lord 2020, I greet you in His love with a heart filled with joy and peace. Our Incarnate Savior is with us, guiding us in His divine will, granting us wisdom, filling our hearts with hope in His eternal promises, and leading us in our sacred ministry to share the Gospel of salvation.

This is a day that calls us to reflection. We look back on the year that has passed, considering all that has happened, the joys and challenges we have experienced. We look forward into the new year with hope, contemplating the opportunities and possibilities, and reflecting on all that we wish to accomplish.

In our time of introspection that comes with the transition to a new year, we must also be mindful of our relationship with God. When we contemplate the direction of our lives, our hopes and wishes, as well as our opportunities and struggles, we cannot neglect the essential role of our faith and our communion with God in addressing all areas of life. He is the Source and Sustainer of our lives. We are beautifully and wonderfully made for a divine purpose, and only through our faith in Him and His abundant grace are we able to experience and explore the great potential we have both now and for eternity.

We are blessed on this day to commemorate a great Father and Ecumenical Teacher of the Church, Basil the Great. His life is an embodiment and excellent example of how we commit our lives to the ways of the Lord. Saint Basil revealed the grace and power of God by living in the holy manner in which the faithful in Philippi were exhorted to do by the Apostle Paul: *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* (Philippians 4:8) Saint Basil not only thought about these things, he lived them.

In faith and by the grace of God, Saint Basil knew the truth as revealed through Christ, and he preached, taught, and defended the truth throughout his life. He was honorable in character; he was just in addressing the struggles of others; his heart was pure, thus he saw God; his manner and ministry were filled with love and grace. In all things he pursued excellence, which for him was not only grounded in his worship of God, but represented the glorious power of grace and a firm witness of Christ. For Saint Basil, excellence in life was achieved through a life of worship, prayer, and service, and through a life that was transformed by the love of God....



On this blessed Feast of Saint Basil the Great and the inauguration of a new calendar year, may we reflect on the life of this holy man of God who pursued excellence in all things. May we commit to deepening our communion with God so that we may do what is true, honorable, pure, lovely, and gracious. Let us reflect on all of these things so that our opportunities and possibilities are imbued with the grace of God, and we are witnesses to all of His Life-Giving presence.

With paternal love in Christ, † ELPIDOPHOROS, Archbishop of America

### **Service Schedule for This Week**

**Today after social**, we will perform the Great Blessing of Waters at **1:00**. Please bring a bottle/container so you can take some home. **Tomorrow morning at 8**, we will celebrate Holy Theophany with the Liturgy of St. Basil. Also, please note that **Fr. Joseph is out of town next weekend**; there will be no Vespers service next Saturday, and we will serve 3<sup>rd</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> hours and a Readers service led by Subdeacon Theophan (Kari) David at 10:00 AM on Sunday.

### **Social Team for January 12**

Team 1 is up next week – Blaydoe P., Chumak, Connour. Thank you!

#### **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, Dn. Steve Hall, 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 Domieniecki, 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, Dcn. 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.)