

**St. Mary's Orthodox Church**  
**217 First Street – Coaldale Pa 18218-1602**  
**Phone.....570-645-2772**  
**OUR WEBSITE...www.stmarysnativity.org**

Rector: V. Rev. James Weremedic  
Retired Attached: V. Rev Paul Ropitsky  
Reader Hours: Kaitlyn Dymtrow

**Sunday, January 7, 2024**

Choir Director: Wash King  
Reader Epistle: Michael Ropitsky

**31<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST Tone 6. Afterfeast of the Theophany. Sunday after Theophany. Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John.**

We welcome all our visitors today! We want to let you know that we are so glad you came to pray with us. Please come again; join us after the Divine Liturgy in the parish hall for fellowship. If you do not have a home church, we invite you to become a part of our parish family. Only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves may approach the Chalice and receive Holy Communion.

**SERVICES:**

Saturday, Jan. 6	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Jan. 7	8:00 AM – Matins
Sunday, Jan. 7	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Fellowship Hour
Saturday, Jan. 13	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Jan. 14	8:00 AM – Matins
Sunday, Jan. 14	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Fellowship Hour
Saturday, Jan. 20	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Jan. 21	8:00 AM – Matins
Sunday, Jan. 21	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Archbishop Mark Celebrating, Fellowship



**Home Blessing: Please use the 2023 Home Blessing Sign-up Sheet in the vestibule for those who want their homes blessed. Fr. James will call to set a day and time.**

**If anyone is in need of a priest, please call Father James Weremedic at 570-645-2772. Visitation of the Sick and Infirm: If you are going into the hospital for any reason, please inform Fr. James at the Rectory. Emergency Calls: Please call the Rectory (570-645-2772) anytime (day or night) in an emergency.**

**Prayer List\*:**

Fr. Michael Evans, Fr. James Weremedic, Sbdn. James Weremedic  
Stephanie Chmel, Ilene Devine, Julia Forte, Michael & Julia Harahus, Karen & Rose Harkins, Nancy King,  
Olga Kushnir, Anna Marie Mantey, Dorothy & Joseph Macenka, Anna Pierson, Melissa Schmitt, Helen  
Sheers, Olga Sidoriak, Martha Stafiniak, Michael Teno, Elizabeth Warcholak, Marie Yurchak

\* Names will cycle off approximately every 30 days. You may request to have your name or  
the name of a loved one placed back on the list at any time by contacting Fr. James directly.

**Candles (January 7)**

7-day Vigils-Altar... In memory of **Joe Herbert** offered by Millie O'Shura  
Altar Candles... In memory of **Olga Hebda** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak  
Eternal Lamp... In memory of **Ted Bogosh, Jr.** offered by Bogosh family  
7-day Vigils-Tetrapod... In memory of **Ted Bogosh** offered by Gloria Bench & Terri Bogosh  
Vigil Crosses... In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel** offered by family members  
Flowers Tetrapod... In Memory of **Ted Bogosh** offered by the Bogosh family  
Bulletin Sponsor... In Memory of **Ted Bogosh** (of his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday) offered by Bogosh family

**January Birthdays:** 2- Tommy Shanosky, 7-Jhanyah Bracero, 13- Dr. Ronald Berezniak,  
21- Helen Sheers, 28- Edward Pierson, 31- Michael Birocik

**January Anniversaries:** 1- Edward & Anna Pierson, 9- Wash & Helen King, 23- Russell & Geri King

**Financials 12/25/2023: Operating Acct:** Envelopes \$15, Non-envelope \$600, Donations \$200, Holy Day  
\$727, Candles \$56, Charity Fund \$20

**Financials 12/31/2023: Operating Acct:** Weekly Envelopes \$363, Non-envelope \$560, Candles \$60,  
Donations \$1,160, Holy Day \$95, Building Fund \$20, Fuel Fund \$30, Youth Group \$100

**Fellowship Hour Hosts:**

January 7 John Evetushick      January 14 Helen King      January 21 Russell King  
January 28 Michael Tatusko      February 4 Valentine's Day Fund Raiser Turkey Dinner

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, we held our 'New Year Pork & SauerKraut Meal' in our church  
hall. Beside the parishioners attending, several people from the community and even  
inquirers to our parish enjoyed the fellowship. We thank everyone who prepared via  
cooked, baked, served and cleaned up.

**We plan to have a Valentine's Day (Feb 4<sup>th</sup>) fundraiser  
via a Turkey Dinner. Please mark your calendar!**

If you have any Redner receipts, please call or get them to Helen King.

Please use your Boyer's card when shopping at Boyers; if you need one call Helen King.

**January 7, 2024 31<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST Tone 6.** Afterfeast of the Theophany.  
Sunday after Theophany. Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John.

**Tone 6 Troparion (Resurrection)**

The Angelic Powers were at Your tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Your grave, seeking Your most pure body. You captured hell, not being tempted by it. You came to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord, Who rose from the dead, // glory to You.

**Tone 1 Troparion (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, and called You His beloved Son; and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God, You have revealed Yourself // and hast enlightened the world, glory to You.

**Tone 2 Troparion (Forerunner)**

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner. You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the Prophets, for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the streams of the Jordan Him Whom they foretold. Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy, you proclaimed to those in hell God Who appeared in the flesh, Who takes away the sin of the world // and grants us great mercy.

**Tone 6 Kontakion (Forerunner)**

The river Jordan trembled, and was driven back, filled with fear at Your coming in the flesh, while John drew back in awe as he fulfilled the ministry of the Spirit. The ranks of Angels stood amazed when they beheld You baptized in the stream. And we who were in darkness are filled with light. // We praise You, O God made manifest, as You enlighten all.

**Tone 4 Kontakion (Feast)**

Today You have shone forth to the world, O Lord, and the light of Your countenance has been marked on us. Knowing You, we sing Your praises: "You have come and revealed Yourself, // O unapproachable Light."

**Acts 19:1-8 (Epistle, Forerunner)**

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Now the men were about twelve in all. And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

### ***Silent Prayer before the Gospel:***

Illuminate our hearts, O Master Who lovest mankind, with the pure light of Thy divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Thy gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto Thee. For Thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thy Father, Who is from everlasting, and Thine all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

### **John 1:29-34 (Gospel, Forerunner)**

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

### **Why are Orthodox Christian clergy "adorned" in fancy vestments at worship services? Doesn't this stand in conflict with Christ's teachings on humility?**

The idea of those who preside at public worship services is not unknown in Scripture—read Exodus 28 and 29, for example. As such, in virtually every Christian tradition—Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, and much of Protestantism—presiding clergy wear vestments of some type, albeit not of the same "style," when engaged in leading the faithful in worship. [Sometimes such garb is academic in origin, rather than strictly liturgical; nevertheless, the preacher wearing a doctoral robe does not do so out of pride or self aggrandizement.] So, those who lead public worship are "set apart" by wearing "formal" robes specific to their calling, and not for the purpose of exalting themselves above the so-called "rank and file."

The purpose here is not to "personally adorn" the clergy or to elevate them "above the common people," any more than judges who wear black robes or physicians who wear a white jacket are being aggrandized because of their vocations. When discharging their "official duties," judges and physicians vest themselves accordingly, indicating their "functions," so to speak. So too clergy, when officiating at liturgical services, wear vestments.

Vestments, obviously, do not resemble "secular" garb, in line with the fact that Orthodox Christian liturgical celebrations are not "secular" gatherings, nor are they designed to resemble them. Liturgy is our experience of and participation in the very Kingdom of God, yet to be fully revealed but already fully present in the life of the Church, her worship, and her sacraments. For additional information, please visit [this link](#). For the broader Scriptural context in which the use of vestments is discussed, please visit [this link](#). Hope this helps.

[Why do Orthodox Christian clergy wear vestments? - Questions & Answers - Orthodox Church in America \(oca.org\)](#)

## **Why Do We Have Our Homes Blessed?**

by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.

### **Begin Everything with Prayer**

Since we are reminded in Scripture to begin whatever we do with prayer, it has been the practice of Orthodox Christians for centuries to have new dwellings blessed either before or just after settling in. This has been extended to one's business or office, and even college dorm rooms. "The service performed by the priest to bless the new dwelling is somewhat similar to the consecration of a church [in the Russian practice] in that holy water, holy oil, and incense are used and a lesson from the Holy Gospel is read. All the rooms of the house are sprinkled with holy water and each of the four outer walls are anointed with the sign of the Cross with holy oil, a candle placed before them, and after the censing of the house, the lesson from the Holy Gospel is read [in Greek practice the service of the Small Blessing of Waters is generally done]. At the conclusion of the blessing, the inhabitants are blessed with holy water: the husband first, followed by the wife and then the children - the oldest first. Relatives and friends present are then blessed." (Marriage and the Christian Home, by Rev. Michael B. Henning, p.24.)

### **Back to "The Fall"**

From Scripture, we know that whatever God created was good, but with "the Fall", evil entered the world, corrupting the creation. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to save it by effecting a "new creation". This is celebrated at Theophany, specifically with 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." (The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II, Worship, by Fr. Thomas Hopko, p.127.) All the readings, hymns, prayers, and actions of the day speak of God's presence in our entire world and universe, His creation. Through water all of the creation is once again sanctified by God, becoming good again, the way God had intended.

### **The Feast Of Theophany**

The Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany) commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. We know from the Troparion of the day that "the Trinity was made manifest" to us. But there's more to it than this. "When Jesus descends into the depths of the river, there occurs a profound upheaval. It is not the One baptized who is purified, for He is spotless; but it is the water that is transfigured and illumined. This water, which was believed to be transparent and purifying, is in fact polluted, inhabited by evil spirits, servants of the old gods. ... By purifying the elements, by sanctifying matter, Jesus frees the cosmos from the powers of evil." (The Incarnate God, Vol. I, Catherine Aslanoff, French edition editor, translated by Paul Meyendorff, p.163.)

### **The Great Blessing of Water and the Home**

The Great Blessing of Water takes place at the end of that day's Liturgy. Since our homes cannot be brought to the Church, the Church - through the priest and cantor - go to the homes. There the service of blessing, which began in the church, is finished with the sprinkling of water in the home. Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 6/13). By sanctifying our living quarters, our private place, we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings. (In very large parishes a yearly visit may not be possible. In areas of the country where the winter is harsh, I know of at least one parish where houses are blessed at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year in September.) We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the

year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life. "There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day." (Little Falcons: Water, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p.33.)

### **Weaving Christ into Our Lives"**

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings." (Marriage and the Christian Home, p.25.) If the priest comes to bless the home when the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home.

### **In Summary**

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!

### **Getting Ready for Home Blessing**

Christ, by entering the Jordan, sanctified it, and with it all creation. Material creation once again became "very good" as it was in the beginning. The central sign of God's sanctification of all things through the feast of Theophany is the act of blessing the homes of faithful Christians. The priest visits all members of the Church to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with Holy Water. He asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. Thus the house itself, together with the living persons of the family, is "filled with all the fullness of God".

To prepare for the priest's visit to bless your home:

- A. Make a list of the first names of those family members you wish to pray for when the priest arrives, with the living and the deceased in separate columns.
- B. On your dining room table or family altar, place a lighted candle, a Theophany icon or icon of Christ, and a wide bowl (to hold the holy water the priest will bring). Be sure your prayer list is there, too!
- C. Turn on a light in each room, so the priest can see where he is going.
- D. Turn off all TVs, stereos, and computers.
- E. Secure any pets that might jump up on the priest or family, or "get underfoot" as you move from room to room. (Pets may be blessed, too!)
- F. Everyone in the house when the priest arrives should gather around the table/family altar and join in the singing of the litany responses and troparion.
- G. The children may lead the priest around the house with a lit candle, if he permits