

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

Sunday, January 8, 2023
Choir Director: Wash King

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORYFY HIM!

Services:

Sunday, January 8- 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Oath of Office for Church Council & Auditors
Saturday, January 14- 4:00 PM – Great Vespers and Confessions
Sunday, January 15- 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy and Fellowship Hour
Saturday, January 21- 4:00 PM – Great Vespers and Confessions
Sunday, January 22- 9:30 PM – Divine Liturgy, Parastas, and Fellowship Hour
Saturday, January 28- 4:00 PM – Great Vespers and Confessions
Sunday, January 29- 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy and Fellowship Hour: SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS

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 Church Hall for Coffee Hour. If you do not have a home church, we invite you to become a part of our Church Family. Please Note: Only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves may approach the Chalice and receive Holy Communion.*

Prayer List:

Fr. James Weremedic, Matushka Lisa Weremedic
Andrew Balliet, Michael Birozik, Clark Andrew Bogosh, Theodore Bogosh, Danielle Bogosh, Ashley Buchanan, Emmalyn Naomi Buchanan, Evanna Jane Buchanan, Stephanie Chmel, Ilene Devine, Nadine Fegley, Julia Forte, Michael & Julia Harahus, Karen Harkins, Nancy King, Russell King, Michael Kulick, Olga Kushnir, Anna Marie Mantey, Mildred O'Shura, Dale Renninger, Melissa Schmitt, Althea Shellock, Olga Sidoriak, Mary Simone, Martha Stafiniak, Martha Teno, Michael Teno, Joseph Tosca, Elizabeth Warcholak, Russell Wishousky, Russell Yallas, George Yurchak, & Marie Yurchak.

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.

Candles (January 8)

7-day Vigils-Altar...In memory of **Mary & Andrew Yelsh** offered by William Yelsh
Altar Candles... In memory of **Aunt Olga Hebda** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak
Eternal Lamp... In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel Family** offered by Family Members
Vigil Crosses...In memory of **Mother, Mary Lutash** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak
7-day Vigils-Tetrapod...In memory of **Lillian Yelsh** offered by William Yelsh
Decorated Candles/Tetrapod- In memory of **Rose (Winsko) Maliniak** offered by Friends



Home Sweet Home

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.

January Birthdays:

2- Tommy Shanosky, 3- Allysa Vavra, 7- Ted Bogosh (98), 13- Dr. Ronald Berezniak, 21- Helen Sheers

January Anniversaries:

1- Edward & Anna Pierson, 9- Wash & Helen King, 23- Russell & Geri King

Financials 1/1/23: **Operating Acct:** Candles 73 - Altar Candles 110 - Offerings 892

Non-Envelope 386 - Holy Days 189 – Christmas 30 – Donations 440 = Total \$2,120.00.

Building Fund 1 – Initial Envelopes 135

The boxes of envelopes cost \$449.91; So far \$155.00 has been collected in the initial envelopes.

Each box of envelopes cost \$6.92

Please continue to keep filling your church envelopes. Thank you!

Fellowship Hour Hosts:

January 8 John Evetushick January 15 Russell King

January 22 Lena Berezniak January 29 Helen King

There is a sign-up sheet for Fellowship Hour in the vestibule if you would like to host.

Thank you to everyone who helped, prepared and clean-up with our New Year's Dinner!

Thank you to everyone who came and supported the Dinner!
Plans are forming a spaghetti and meatball dinner in February 2023.

Please use Amazon Smile when ordering from Amazon.

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

Wall calendars for 2023 are in the back of the church.

Boxes of offering envelopes for 2023 are in the back of the church.

“FOR THE FATHER’S VOICE BORE WITNESS TO THEE . . .”



he Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist — an event that is a large part of our celebration of the FEAST DAY OF THEOPHANY — was one of the most dramatic events in the history of mankind. On that awesome day, the Holy Trinity was revealed to the world as the Holy Spirit descended over our Lord in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father was heard from heaven, proclaiming: *“This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17)

How old was Jesus when He was baptized? The Evangelist Luke tells us: *“Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age.”* (Luke 3:23) Up to this point, He lived in relative obscurity. Aside from the details of His Nativity, all the Gospels tell us about the early years of Christ is an incident when He was taken to Jerusalem by His parents for the celebration of the Passover when He was 12 years old.

According to Jewish tradition, there is great significance attached to the age of 30. This was the age when a man was truly viewed as an adult, having the knowledge and experience to teach others. If Christ were truly to be accepted as the Great Teacher that He was, and to be worthy of being called *“Rabbi”* by the people, He could not have been any younger than this. Yes, in all aspects of His life, our Lord carefully adhered to the religious customs and traditions of His time.

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST Tone 5. Afterfeast of the Theophany. Sunday after Theophany.

Troparion — Tone 1 - 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 have enlightened the world, glory to You!

Kontakion — Tone 4 - Today You have shown 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.

The second day of the After feast of Theophany falls on January 8. At Vespers we repeat a hymn which has already been sung at Compline for Theophany. In the hymn Saint John wonders in whose name, he should baptize Christ. Should he baptize Him in the name of the Father? The Lord Jesus Christ already bears Him in Himself. Of the Son? He Himself is the incarnate Son of God. Of the Holy Spirit? Christ Himself sends the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:7-13 (Epistle, Sunday After)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."

(Now this, "He ascended" – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Matthew 4:12-17 (Gospel, Sunday After)

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.

And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Venerable Domnica of Constantinople

Saint Domnica came from Carthage to Constantinople in the time of the holy Emperor Theodosius the Great. Here she was baptized by Patriarch Nectarius and entered a women's monastery.

Through strict and prolonged ascetic effort, she attained to high spiritual perfection. The saint healed the sick, demonstrated power over the natural elements, and predicted the future. By her miracles the saint moved inhabitants of the capital towards concerns about life eternal and the soul. Adorned by virtues, the saint departed this life a spotless virgin in her old age.

Venerable Gregory, Wonderworker of the Kiev Near Caves

Saint Gregory was tonsured at the Kiev Caves monastery in the time of Saint Theodosius (May 3). The saint devoted much time to reading books, which were his sole possession. He had the ability to bring thieves to their senses. Several times robbers broke in on him in his cell or in the garden, but the saint reasoned with them, the thieves repented, and began to lead honest lives.

Once, when the monk went to the Dnieper River for water, some servants of Prince Rostislav caught sight of the Elder and rudely began making fun of him. The saint answered them, "Children, when you should be asking for everyone's prayers, you are displeasing God. Weep, for disaster approaches. Repent and ask God to be merciful to you on the Day of Judgment. All you will find death in the water with your prince." By orders of the enraged Prince Rostislav, the monk was bound hand and foot, and he was drowned in the Dnieper with a stone around his neck. Still, his prediction came true. Rostislav did not return from the campaign. In that same year of 1093 the twenty-year-old prince drowned in sight of his brother, Vladimir Monomakh, trying to save himself as he fled from the Polovetsians.

Several sources identify Saint Gregory with Saint Gregory, a composer of Canons in honor of the holy Prince Vladimir, Saint Theodosius, and the holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb. But Saint Gregory, compiler of canons, lived later and died in about the year 1120. Saint Gregory the Wonderworker died in 1093 and was buried in the Near Caves.

Martyr Abo the Perfumer, of Tbilisi, Georgia

In the 8th century a Saracen army tyrannized Kartli as a first step towards overturning the Georgian nation. The invaders were certain that the best way to conquer Georgia was to uproot the Christian Faith. The Georgian people were alarmed, and the clergy and the best sons of Kartli sought desperately for a resolution to this calamity. Much blood was shed in 766 when the Muslim invaders crushed an uprising in the eastern region of Kakheti.

In 772, Caliph Al Mansur (754-775), dissatisfied with the provincial governor of Kartli, Duke Nerse, summoned him to Baghdad. Nerse spent the following three years in captivity. During that time he became acquainted with a seventeen-year-old perfumer named Abo, and when he was released he brought Abo back with him to Georgia. Abo was amazed at the great piety of the Georgian people, and he began to learn the Georgian language, attend the divine services, and speak with local priests. Abo sought with all his heart to become a Christian, and he was eventually baptized in Khazaria, while in the company of Duke Nerse.

Later, Abo accompanied the duke to Abkhazeti, to escape the Saracen raids. Discovering an entire population of Christians praising Jesus Christ with one heart and mouth, Abo gave great thanks to God for the opportunity to visit this area. Nerse later returned to Kartli, but Abo remained at the request of the Abkhaz king, who feared that the Saracens would torture Abo for his devout faith in Christ. Soon, however, Abo became restless and told the king, "Let me go, and I will freely declare my Christian Faith to those who hate Christ!"

Abo labored in Tbilisi for three years, preaching the Christian Faith. Then his own former countrymen betrayed and captured him, but he was released soon after at the request of the duke Stepanoz. A new emir was appointed to rule in Tbilisi, and when the Christians heard that he was plotting to capture Abo, they begged him to conceal his identity. But Abo simply rejoiced and told them, "I am prepared not only to be tortured for Christ, but to die for His sake as well." As predicted, the emir's servants captured Abo and brought him before a judge. The judge tried in vain to entice Abo to return to the faith of his ancestors. Then, in a rage, he ordered that Abo be cast into prison and that his hands and feet be fettered in chains. But his suffering for Christ filled the blessed Abo with even greater love, and he asked his Christian brothers and sisters to sell his clothes and use the money earned to buy candles and incense for local churches.

On the day of his execution Abo washed his face, anointed it with holy oil, partook of the Holy Gifts, and prepared for his death as though preparing for a feast. "Weep not, but rejoice, for I am going to my Lord. Pray for me, and may the peace of God protect you," he cheerfully told the faithful Christians who surrounded him in his last hours. When his time had come, Saint Abo placed his arms on his breast in the form of a cross and joyously bowed his head beneath the sword. The executioners swung their swords three times in hopes of frightening Abo into denying Christ, but the blessed Abo stood unyielding until his last breath. Finally, convinced that all their efforts and cunning were in vain, the executioners were given a sign and they beheaded the holy Abo. Defeated and ashamed, Abo's godless executioners tossed his body, his garments, and the earth that had been soaked with his blood into a sack, dragged it outside the city, and burned it near the Mtkvari River. Then they wrapped his ashes in sheepskin and cast them into the river.

In the evening a sign was given from above. Next to the Metekhi Cliff, by the bridge, a shining star hung over the river with its bright light reflecting in the water where the remains of the saint rested. Later, a chapel was built in honor of Saint Abo on the left bank of the Mtkvari.

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