

Sts. Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church

First-enthroned of the apostles, teachers of the universe: Entreat the Master of all to grant peace to the world, and to our souls great mercy!

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January 9, 2022

SUNDAY AFTER THE THEOPHANY MARTYR POLYEUCTUS OF MELITENE IN ARMENIA

Today 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Wed. 12 7:15pm Bible Study Via
GoogleMeet
Fri. 14 6:00pm Fun Night
Sat. 15 6:00pm Vespers
Sun. 16 10:00am Divine Liturgy

One must be baptized and chrismated an Orthodox Christian to receive Holy Communion. Guests are invited to receive a blessing at the chalice and partake of the post-Communion bread (Antidoron).

Fast Days: Wednesday and Friday (fasting from meat, fish, eggs, dairy, wine and oil as you are able.)

Troparion – Tone 1 (Feast of Theophany)

*When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized
in the Jordan,
the worship of the Trinity was made
manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore
witness to Thee,
and called Thee His beloved Son;
and the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His
word.
O Christ our God, Who hast
revealed Thyself
and hast enlightened the world,
glory to Thee.*

Kontakion – Tone 4 (St. Polyeuctus)

*When the Savior bowed His head in
the Jordan,
the heads of the dragons were
crushed;
when Polyeuctus was beheaded, the
deceiver was put to shame.*

Prayers for those in our Sts. Peter and Paul community (parishioners, family, friends) can be listed for remembrance in our litanies during the Liturgy. Feel free to give names to Fr. Nicholas - please indicate how each person listed is connected to us (parishioner, family, friend, etc.), as well as why we are praying for them (health, memory, travel, etc.).

Confessions can be heard by appointment. If you need, I will come to you during the week. Please do not hesitate to call for a time to drop by the church or to have me visit you.

Remembrances for both the living and the dead during the prayers of preparation of the Eucharistic Lamb and during the Augmented Litany should be given the week before the desired remembrance so that the names can be put into the bulletin and given to the Deacons for the prayers. Any names of the living that are not marked as sick or traveling will be listed under general prayers.

SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK

Church Lectionary

Today

Ephesians 4:7-13
Matthew 4:12-17

Monday

Hebrews 8:7-13
Luke 20:27-44

Tuesday

2 Corinthians 4:6-15
Matthew 11:27-30
Hebrews 9:8-10, 15-23
Luke 21:12-19

Wednesday

Hebrews 10:1-18
Luke 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24

Thursday

Hebrews 10:35-11:7
Luke 21:28-33

Friday

Hebrews 11:8, 11-16
Luke 21:37-22:8

Saturday

Ephesians 5:1-8
Luke 13:18-29

Reading the Bible in a Year

Jan 09: Genesis 33-36
Jan 10: Genesis 37-40
Jan 11: Genesis 41-44
Jan 12: Genesis 45-48
Jan 13: Genesis 49-50
Jan 14: Exodus 1-4
Jan 15: Exodus 5-8

JANUARY EVENTS

January

09 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
12 – 7:15pm Bible Study with
GoogleMeet
14 – 6:00pm Fun Night
15 – 6:00pm Vespers
16 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
19 – 7:15pm Bible Study with
GoogleMeet

22 – 6:00pm Vespers
23 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
26 – 7:15pm Bible Study with
GoogleMeet
29 – 6:00pm Vespers
30 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Coffee Hour

We have had no hosts for coffee hour for several weeks. I ask that people sign up for hosting on the sign-up upstairs.

Flower Donation

This week's flowers were donated by:

When Guilt Destroys Us

The conscience is that gift God has bestowed upon us that tells us when we have sinned against Him, and against our neighbor. The conscience calls us to turn from our sin, and seek to change the patterns of behavior that have caused us to sin in the beginning.

This tug by our conscience can be counterproductive if we make no effort at changing our behavior. It can also be counterproductive if we simply give in to despair, and resign ourselves to our sinful behavior, as though there is no cure for our illness. That sense of guilt is meant to aid in the fight to turn around our bad behavior.




When we have sinned, and our sins are tormenting us, it is at that moment that we must seek out Christ, for only His sacrifice for our sins is eternal and living. When we lay our sins before the face of that sacrifice, we have nothing to fear, for we recognize that we can not be saved by your own efforts.

If we simply surrender to guilt, we will find nothing but destruction, and our conscience will have been of no benefit whatsoever, and victory will not be ours.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon




A Prayer for the Week

The Jordan accepted Your presence in the flesh and reversed its course in fear. John, fulfilling the spiritual ministry, fell back in awe. The ranks of Angels, seeing You in the flesh, baptized in the river, were amazed, and all who were in darkness were filled with light, praising You who appeared and enlightened all.

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"God is inexhaustible in His gifts to men? Everywhere we see plenty and joy; only the greedy rich lay their hands on and keep in their treasuries too many of God's gifts, which might plentifully nourish hundreds and thousands of poor. Man! Believe firmly in God's inexhaustibility in His gifts, and willingly 'deal your bread to the hungry'"

-St. John of Kronstadt

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House Blessings are coming up in 2022! Please sign up on the sheet upstairs so that we can begin to organize and schedule House blessings. Please be sure to leave your name and phone number. Alternatively, you can call Fr. Nicholas at 860-861-7468 and he will take your information.

Ephesians 4:7-13

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

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."

Children's Word

The Great Light

Have you ever watched the sun rise? Maybe you woke up very early one morning, even while it was still dark out. You might have seen how the sun started to make everything light, even before you could really see the sun.

Today, in the Gospel reading, we hear about where our Lord, Jesus Christ, lived. Remember, He grew up in a place called Nazareth. But then, He moved a little ways away in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. But why does all that matter?

Well, long before Jesus was born, a prophet (Isaiah) wrote, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

Those people had been waiting, just as the whole world was waiting. The world was waiting for somebody to save them, to save the whole world. And the Bible says, "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." That light is our Lord, Jesus Christ! Remember how the sun makes the dark morning bright and light again? Well, Christ is the "great light" who made the whole world bright and light, too!

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA SAINT BASIL'S
BROTHER

Do you have a brother or a sister? If you do, you might have heard somebody call you, "Peter's sister" or "Maria's brother," or whomever. Sometimes you might have thought you don't have a name, just somebody's brother or sister!

Tomorrow we celebrate a saint with a very well-known brother. Saint Gregory of Nyssa was the younger brother of Saint Basil, and everybody loves Saint Basil. We celebrated his day on the first of January. In Greece, children get little presents on that day, and they remember Saint Basil. But do you know Saint Gregory too?

Saint Gregory did so much for our Christian Church. Long ago, lots of people were saying that our Lord, Jesus Christ, was not really God. They said the Son (Christ) was not equal with God the Father. But Saint Gregory argued and argued against these people. He showed that they were wrong.

Saint Basil made his younger brother Gregory a bishop, and they loved and respected each other very much. When Basil died, Gregory finished some of his brother's writings, and we still have them today! Saint Gregory was a good little brother, but a great Church Father!

We celebrate St. Gregory tomorrow, January 10th

Christ IS Baptized

January 6, 2022 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

All of us come to moments in our lives that turn out to be crossroads in our future. Many times we can see these moments coming, like a marriage proposal, or that first purchase of a home, or career advancement, some (maybe even many) of these moments sneak up on us and surprise us with their importance even years after the event. I can think of several moments in my life that, looking back, had a profound effect on the trajectory of my life. As I look at these moments, I am filled with all kinds of emotions: gratitude, shame, regret, fear, joy, and everything in between. What about your life?

What were the crossroads in your life? Successes? Mistakes? Milestones? Wrong turns? I imagine all of these and more ring a bell for you. But there are moments in history that are turning points for the whole human race, and that's what we are confronting today.

Look at our lesson today in Matthew 3:13-17:

At that time, Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

This Feast is actually one of the oldest feasts in the Church, maybe even the oldest commemoration among us Christians besides the Resurrection. In fact, and this may surprise you, the Feast of Theophany is a higher ranking Feast than Christmas and history tells us that the Nativity Feast and Theophany were all celebrated together initially. And that makes perfect sense in light of the theology preserved by these ancient celebrations. What theology, you ask? Very good, a perfect question.

The unique and controversial theology that God took on Flesh so that Flesh (and all creation) could be deified. A big word, I know. But with the dual rise of both secularism and Islamic theology in our day, our children are going to need to be prepared to face an increasingly hostile environment for the Christian Faith with serious and robust, and purposeful Orthodoxy! And that starts with the true identity of Jesus Christ!

In this passage, we discover that very identity!

When St. John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognizes the Lord, he rightly declares "I need to be baptized by you." St. John sees what many today refuse to see; Jesus is not just a great teacher. He isn't just a powerful prophet. Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world! St. John's insight causes him to see himself as needing Christ first and foremost.

But the Lord's response reveals another aspect of the Lord's identity. He wants to "fulfill all righteousness." The hymns of today's feast show that creation longed for its Creator to enter into the water so that the water could be restored to its original purpose: not just to satisfy physical thirst or clean physical bodies or refresh physical hungers, but to go further and to actually make the Creator "present" to Creation. Jesus comes to not just tell us about the Father but to "show" us the Father. Jesus comes and enters into the River Jordan so that all creation could be made what it was intended to be: A Divine Mystery of God's presence and love!

Finally, the dove and the Voice from heaven reconfirm all this. The dove symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Voice of the Father witnesses to His Son's identity: "This IS my beloved Son!" And because Jesus is beloved of the Father, so we, too, connected to Christ are also invited to experience being beloved by the Father through Christ!

Today, as we celebrate this Timeless Feast, let's truly celebrate the deep and profound theology we Orthodox declare. God has become Flesh for our sake so that our flesh can be grafted into His eternal and Divine grace. In a world increasingly gripped by confusions of identity and a loss of knowing the "faith, once, for all, delivered to the saints" being Orthodox on Purpose has never been more important!

К Ефесянам 4:7-13

Каждому же из нас дана благодать по мере дара Христова. Посему и сказано: восшел на высоту, пленил плен и дал дары человекам. А 'восшел' что означает, как не то, что Он и нисходил прежде в преисподние места земли? Нисшедший, Он же есть и восшедший превыше всех небес, дабы наполнить все. И Он поставил одних Апостолами, других пророками, иных Евангелистами, иных пастырями и учителями, к совершению святых, на дело служения, для созидания Тела Христова, доколе все придем в единство веры и познания Сына Божия, в мужа совершенного, в меру полного возраста Христова;

От Матфея 4:12-17

Услышав же Иисус, что Иоанн отдан [под стражу], удалился в Галилею и, оставив Назарет, пришел и поселился в Капернауме приморском, в пределах Завулоновых и Неффалимовых, да сбудется реченное через пророка Исаию, который говорит: земля Завулонова и земля Неффалимова, на пути приморском, за Иорданом, Галилея языческая, народ, сидящий во тьме, увидел свет великий, и сидящим в стране и тени смертной воссиял свет. С того времени Иисус начал проповедывать и говорить: покайтесь, ибо приблизилось Царство Небесное.

Efesianeve 4:7-13

Edhe gjithësecilit prej nesh iu dha hiri sipas masës së dhuratës së Krishtit. Prandaj thotë: “Si u ngjit lart, skllavëroi skllavëri, edhe u dha dhurata njerëzve”. Edhe se “ai u ngjit”, ç’është tjetër, veçse edhe zbriti më parë në pjesët më të poshtme të dheut? Ai që zbriti, është ai që edhe u ngjit sipër gjithë qiejve, që t’i plotësojë të gjitha. Edhe ai dha që disa të jenë apostuj, e disa profetë, e disa ungjilltarë, edhe disa barinj e mësues, për përgatitjen e shenjtëve, për veprën e shërbesës, për ndërtimin e trupit të Krishtit, deri sa të arrijmë të gjithë në bashkimin e besimit, edhe të njohjes së Birit të Perëndisë, në një njeri të përsosur, në masën e shtatit të plotësisë së Krishtit,

Mattheut 4:12-17

Edhe Jisui kur dëgjoi se Joani u dorëzua, iku në Galile. Edhe si la Nazaretin, erdhi e ndenji në Kapernaum që është pranë detit, në kufijtë e Zabulonit edhe të Neftalimit, që të përmbushet ç’është thënë nga profeti Isaia, që thotë: “Dheu Zabulon edhe dheu Neftalim, në udhën e detit përtej Jordanit, Galilea e kombeve, populli që rrinte në errësirë pa dritë të madhe, edhe atyre që rrinin në vend e në hije vdekjeje u lindi dritë”. Që atëherë Jisui filloi të predikojë e të thotë: Pendohuni, sepse u afrua mbretëria e qiejve.

True Friend

January 7, 2022 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

Ralph Waldo Emerson once suggested that the greatest invention of humanity is friendship. But Emerson is mistaken. Friendship isn't man's invention. It is God's. And a man is truly rich indeed when he has friends! That makes the current pandemic of loneliness all the more terrible and soul-crushing for this generation. We weren't meant for loneliness.

No matter how hard we try to hide it, our hunger for intimacy, relationships, and communion always "spills" out of our hearts. That's why we hunger for friends and companions. That's why, as rare a true love may be, true friendship is rarer still. And yet, we long for it even when our minds can't articulate the need.

It's because we were made in the image of Him Who is Communion Himself. God made us in His image to become His companions in His likeness. And it is this fundamental and primary drive within us toward that amazing reality that creates this hunger for companionship and friends. You were meant to be in community and surrounded by people who love you more than they love themselves, and you were meant to be a person who loves his friends more than he loves himself. This is the very definition of what faith is meant to create among us.

And it's why God, in His timeless patience and love, sent the Forerunner ahead of Christ to prepare the Way for the Messiah to be revealed.

Look at our lesson today in John 1:29-34:

At that time, 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 ranks before me, for he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Yesterday we stood with St. John as the amazing happened. God in the flesh came to John at the Jordan to be baptized. John felt that the roles should be reversed and that Christ should baptize John instead of the other way around. But Jesus came to do a specific work and John understood his mission and obeyed! John, despite his doubts and his concerns later as he faced death, never forgot just why he was part of this unfolding mystery of love in God coming to save the universe. He knew he was meant to prepare the Way for the Lord to speak His message of true liberty and salvation to the nation of Israel and then to the whole world. He understood his role and he never wavered, even when he had questions. His intimacy with God, his time of preparation in the wilderness through prayer and fasting, had all produced this spiritual fruit of obedience and trust. Of course, that's why the spiritual disciplines are so important. They produce the fruit of intimacy!

Today, what barriers still stand in your way of experiencing true friendship, true communion? What stumbles or fears keep you in the tormented state of desiring to be with true friends and yet always afraid of being hurt or wounded? The path out of this perpetual slavery of soul comes in the risky notion of obedience out of love. The dangerous risk of being vulnerable to the mistakes and fears of others all the while knowing and seeing your own mistakes and fears. The path to finding true friends, true communion, true intimacy with God and others will be in a willingness to "see" the Lord coming to you as He did John and the Lord asking for your free cooperation in perpetuating this freedom of knowing Him and then knowing others as true friends indeed. Take the chance. Say "yes" to God today, and keep saying "yes", and watch as you aren't guaranteed no pain, but you are guaranteed a growing awareness of His intimate Presence in your life. It's the path to being Orthodox on Purpose!