



# The Weekly Forerunner

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

301 Struthers Liberty Rd

Campbell, OH 44405

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest



## JANUARY Bulletin Sponsor- OPEN

### Liturgical & Events Schedule

#### Sunday, January 5- STRICT FAST DAY

9:35 AM: Hours

10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Social by "O Club" / Church School

4:30 PM: Holy Night Supper

6:00 PM: Vigil of Theophany & the Great Blessing of Water

#### Monday, January 6

9:00 AM: Divine Liturgy followed by breakfast with those interested in going.

#### Tuesday, January 7

6:00 PM: Council Meeting

#### Wednesday, January 8

6:00 PM: Fire Training

#### Thursday, January 9

Book Club canceled due to Presidential Funeral

#### Saturday, January 11

6:00 PM: Great Vespers / Confessions

#### Sunday, January 12

9:35 AM: Hours

10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Panachida for Sub-deacon John Zelina / SOCIAL (open - if interested contact Fr. Andrew or Nancy T.)

Noon: Annual Sisterhood Christmas Party

### JANUARY CHARITY

OCMC- Support a mission Priest

### 40 DAY REMEMBRANCE

January, 12- Eugene Pallai / Dennis Graban

February 2- Mike Dubinka / Pani Joan Mahler / Dorthy Sudak

February 9- Frank Kusky / Noreen Moderalli / Sub-Deacon Vladimir (Walter) Rusnak

### HOME BLESSINGS

Please consider having your homes blessed in January. Contact Father Andrew to set up a time. Home blessings will take place from January 6th through February 1st. (Bring Christ into your home for a good & real relationship with Him.).

### Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Commemorated on January 6

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord -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 fourth to ninth 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, **Con't Next Pg**

## PLEASE KEEP OUR ELDERS OF THE CHURCH & SHUT-INS IN YOUR PRAYERS

Send a “Thinking of You” card or remember their Birthday with a card. If anyone needs to be added, please contact Fr. Andrew.

### *Theophany Con’t from pervious pg*

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.

### **Nativity of our Lord 2024**

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My Beloved Children in the Lord,

Christ is born! Glorify him!

Let the heavenly fires burn silently and let them fearfully gaze upon a humble corner of the universe, upon the black earth, and upon the most precious part of that corner—the grotto that is giving birth to God.

– St. Nikolai Velimirovic, Prayers by the Lake 49

Today is the bright and wonderful, yet secret and humble, culmination of a season spent in hidden anticipation. Unlike Great Lent, when we blow the trumpets to announce a fast (Joel 2:15), the forty days of the Nativity Fast are spent quietly, in the darkness of night—the same night by which the shepherds once kept watch over their flocks (Lk. 2:8). In this darkness, the darkness of the shadow of the Law (Heb. 10:1), we kept company with the holy prophets—Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Daniel, and the Three Holy Children. We heard the first strains of song celebrating Christ’s Nativity on November 21, as the *katavasiae* at the canon. On St. Andrew’s Day, St. Nicholas Day, here and there, a hymn sang of the one who is to come. **Con’t Pg 6**

## PRAYER LIST– Updated 1-3

**PARISHIONERS:** Achilles Arvan / Audrey Chengelis / Helen Colaluca / Joan Cross / Ann Cvercko / Pauline Fesz / Mary Fredericks / George Horodnic / Gianna Hryb / Sue Kennedy / George Kolesar / Barbara Kolesar / Matushka Helen Psinka / Dorothy Shirilla / Julia Simko / Melanie Yannitto / Marion Zwinski

**HIERARCHS & CLERGY:** AP James Gleason (Fr.) / AP Michael Rustic / AP Emil / Fr. Matthew Nyumu & his family & parish

**FAMILY & FRIENDS:** Mary Ann Bozichovich (Kennedy) / Patty Bozichovich (Vansuch) / Donna Chiarelli / Karen Debiec / Paul DEMkosky (Fr.) / Trudy Ellmore / Basil Glovinsky (Fr.) / Bruce Harris (Sabol) / Paula Kennedy / Joe Kollar (Fr.) / Andrew LaChard (Jesko) / James Malchisky (Fr.) / Mea Mahan / Mary Mahan / Pauline Meath (Fr.) / Matushka Raisa (Nicoloff) / Teri Petroff (Fr.) / Chris Quotap (Fr.) / Diane Ruff / Julia Shirilla / Bob Smrek (Sirilla) / Emilia Yanitto / Catherine Zile (Fr.) / Brian (Shirilla) / Chrissy (Fr.) / David (Willison) / Drew (Willison) / Eleanor Marie (Vansuch) / Ellen (Clark) / Ellen (Kessler) / Greg (Fr.) / Johanna (Tusinac) / Joseph (Vansuch) / Karen (Vansuch) / Katherine (Steffaro) / Kathy (Kolesar) / Katie (Garrity) / Paul (Kolesar) / Paula (Voytilla) / Malakai (Kolesar) / Richard (Tusinac) / Steven (Fr)

**MILITARY FAMILY & FRIENDS:** Cory Deaton (Fr.) / Alena Grabavoy (Fr.) / Liam Garrity (Zelinsky)

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Metropolitan Paul (Orthodox Diocese of Aleppo) & Archbishop John (Archdiocese of Aleppo) still being held captive & Metropolitan Arseny imprisoned / The UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers around the world / Those suffering persecution in Syria, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and around the world.

ATTENDANCE: A Comparison - DECEMBER	2023	2024
<b>1st Week</b>		
Vespers	7	No Vespers
Liturgy	52 / 35	52 Liturgy / 38
St Nicholas	23	Weather NO S.
<b>2nd Week</b>		
Vespers	15	13
Liturgy	67 / 37	65 / 50
<b>3rd Week</b>		
Vespers	16	10
Liturgy	60 / 46	55 / 38
<b>4th Week</b>		
Vespers	31	12
Christmas Eve	95 / 53	44
Christmas	79 / 52	75 / 43
<b>5th week</b>		
Vespers	15	No Vespers
Liturgy (NYE)	101 / 74	74 / 48

DECEMBER FINANCIALS	
Expenses	\$18,344.39
Income	\$24,595.36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>+\$6,250.97</b>
Weekly Tithe	\$17,094
Weekly Candles	\$568
Weekly Flowers	\$50
Tetrapod Candles	\$100
St. John the Baptist Candles	\$30
Protection Candles	\$60
Christmas Flowers	\$250
Altar Candles	\$150
St. Herman Candles	\$180
Christmas Offering	\$1,300
Christmas Card	\$340
Rubric Book Reimbursement	\$160
Reimbursement Check for IOCC	\$1,265
Cookie Walk	\$1,169
Kolachi	\$100
Cemetery Reimbursement	\$1,254
Monthly Charity Collection:	
(Zoe for Life– Cleveland)	\$754
Special Collection for Alaska	\$143

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## JANUARY Candle & Bulletin Sponsors

*NOTE: If anything is missing from the Sponsorships please contact Fr. Andrew ASAP*

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### **Bulletin: OPEN**

**Wine:** Donated by Linda L.

**Incense:** Donated by Linda L.

**Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light:** For the health Of Mildred Wilfong on the occasion of her 89th birthday – Given by Michele Basile

**Altar Candles:** In memory of sub-deacon John Zelina– Given by Maureen Koval

**Tetrapod Candles:** In memory of my husband Robert Kennedy on his birthday– Given by Sue Kennedy / Kindness showed from the Vansuch families– Given by the Gemmel Family

**St. Herman Candles:** Commemorating all who participate in maintenance of the church, the teachers, singers & those who participate in social events. Praying for everyone to love one another.

**St. Panteleimon Icon Candles:** In honor of my grandson Bobby Kennedy on his birthday- FGiven by Sue Kennedy / For the Health & salvation to the Presbyter Andrew- Given By Deacon David

**Protection Icon Candles:** In memory of my mother– Given by Sue Kennedy / For the Health & salvation to Deacon James– Given by Deacon David

**St. John the Baptist Candles:** In memory of my brother William Karr– Given by Carol Ruff / For the health & Salvation to the choir master DR. Nick, the choir, all parishioners, family & friends– Given by Deacon David

**Flowers:** In memory of sub-deacon John Zelina– Given by Maureen Koval

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<u>\$50 per month</u>	<u>\$30 per month</u>	<u>\$25 per month</u>
*Wine	*St. Herman candles	Incense
*Bulletin	*St. Panteleimon Icon candles	
*Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light	*Protection Icon candles	<b>Flowers</b> - \$50 for 2 weeks at a time– <i>Updated</i>
*Altar Candles	*St. John the Baptist candles	
*Tetrapod Candles		

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## 2024 DIOCESAN YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year proved to be another active period for Diocese of the Midwest. During this time the diocese had the honor of hosting several major events, honoring distinguished clergy and laity, and experiencing life in the diocese expand.

The Diocese of the Midwest played a central role in hosting various events this past year, including the Orthodox Church in America's four-day Canon Law Conference at St. Peter and St. Paul Church, Burr Ridge, IL. The Diocese also held its annual Clergy Convocation in the spring, and conducted the 63rd Diocesan Assembly at St. Nicholas Church, Mogador, OH, in the fall. The Diocese held a large gathering in honor of the 20th anniversary of the return of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, IL. This event welcomed His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, along with other hierarchs from the OCA. This past year also became historic with the relics of St. John Kochurov, the builder of Holy Trinity Cathedral, being transferred to the holy Cathedral. These relics are now permanently at the Cathedral and the only place in North America where they can be venerated.

His Eminence Archbishop Daniel of Chicago and the Midwest took on various travels making 24 pastoral weekend visits throughout the year. Archbishop also lead a delegation to Tikhvin, Russia in honor of the anniversary of the Tikhvin Icon. His Eminence held a

retreat over the summer bringing the seminarians together for several days of prayer and fellowship. Reconciliation Services in Kansas City, MO also was opened and bless by the Archbishop. A personal milestone was also observed with the 70th birthday of Archbishop Daniel.

The diocese experienced some major announcements this past year. Archpriest Herman Kincaid became the first full time Chancellor of the diocese, while long time Diocesan Treasurer, Robert Koncel, retired from the position after more than 30 years of service, which saw the assignment of Subdeacon Dimitri Pletz to the position. The diocese also approved and began to implement a strategic plan, which includes new departments and bringing life to various dormant ministries. Sadly 2024 also saw one of the historic cathedral of the diocese damaged by fire. St. Theodosius Cathedral, Cleveland, OH suffered significant damage when the roof caught fire during a restoration project. Many communities came together to support St. Theodosius Cathedral's clergy and faithful.

Several communities also celebrated special commemorations and anniversaries. Archangel Michael Church in Broadview Heights, OH celebrated the 100th anniversary. St. Luke Church, Palos Heights, IL enjoyed its 40th anniversary. Other highlights also include Archpriest Andrew Morbey and Archpriest John Zdinak, being awarded the miter for his many years of service. Archpriest John Steffaro was honored for 55 years of service to the Church and Archpriest Nicholas Wyslutsky, Rector and Dean of Cleveland was honored for 30 years of priestly service.

The various ministries of the diocese were **Finished pg 7**

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## JANUARY Reposed List

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|---|---|
| <p>Margaret Graban (1978) ©<br/>         Judith Banas (2019)<br/>         1- Katherine Kristian (1994) ©<br/>         1- Anna Harvischak (2013) ©<br/>         2- Nicholas Libertin (2021) ©<br/>         2- Nicholas Bohac (1921) ©<br/>         2- Elia Dudin (1949) ©<br/>         3- Mitred Archriest Stavros Rousos<br/>         3- Anna Roman (1978) ©<br/>         3- Elizabeth Kuzma (1925) ©<br/>         4- George Bartek (1983)<br/>         4- Archpriest Michael Slovesko<br/>         4- Peter Fatholitis (1937) ©<br/>         5- Ann Marie Petroff (2006) ©<br/>         6- Helen Pender (2016)<br/>         6- John Timkovich (1951) ©<br/>         6- Infant Klimis (still born) (1964)<br/>         6- Mother Elizabeth (2024)<br/>         7- Mary Vansuch, Sr. (1971) ©<br/>         7- Mike Felt (1920) ©<br/>         8- Bishop Mark of Boston (2018)<br/>         8- Sub-deacon John Zeling (2012) ©<br/>         8- John Voytilla (1945) ©<br/>         8- Mary Graban (1995) ©<br/>         9- Katherine Trovers (1980) ©<br/>         9- Carolyn Weil (1998) ©<br/>         9- Vasil Kovach (1925) ©<br/>         9- George Ontko (1943) ©<br/>         9- William Boldish (1968) ©<br/>         11- Alan James Cole (2017) ©<br/>         12- AP Moses Berry (2024)<br/>         14- George O'Shanie (1981) ©<br/>         14- John Graban (1990) ©<br/>         14- Helen Papach (1929) ©<br/>         14- Michael Harvey (1958) ©<br/>         14- John Genaros (1960) ©<br/>         15- Augustine Shima (1928) ©<br/>         15- Fedor Chulik (1943) ©<br/>         16- Elizabeth Mariniak (1927) ©<br/>         16- Infant Nicholas Hariuschak (1996) ©<br/>         17- Vera Kawalik (2001) ©<br/>         17- Anna Talaban (1949) ©</p> | <p>18- Andrew Kovach (1994) ©<br/>         18- Margaret Domowchik (1996) ©<br/>         20- Joshua Zdinak (2016)<br/>         20- Marie Borsic (1984) ©<br/>         20- Catherine Cochran (2011) ©<br/>         20- Diamada Patellis (1929) ©<br/>         20- Irene Horodnic (2024)<br/>         21- George Evans (1984) ©<br/>         21- Fr. Michael Shuster (2020)<br/>         21- Ann Shirilla (2012) ©<br/>         21- Charles Patellis (1928) ©<br/>         21- Catherine Vojtilla (1942) ©<br/>         22- Fr. John Stefanik (2000)<br/>         22- Andrew Pacak (1973) ©<br/>         22- Michael Pasloskey (1985) ©<br/>         22- Steve Dmetruk (2002) ©<br/>         22- Nicholas Bobosh (2008) ©<br/>         22- Lubica Krestich (1926) ©<br/>         23- Fr. Michael Sopoliga (2009)<br/>         23- Helen Midlick (2004) ©<br/>         23- Eugene Kennedy (2004) ©<br/>         23- Rudolph Zelina (2007) ©<br/>         23- Kosovka Raslta (1923) ©<br/>         24- Madeline Puskarcik (2006) ©<br/>         25- Steve Sirihla (1977) ©<br/>         25- Helen Graban (1992) ©<br/>         25- George Magriplis (1931) ©<br/>         25- Veronica Shirilla (1995) ©<br/>         26- Nate DiPero (1985) ©<br/>         26- Baby Brown (1939) ©<br/>         26- Vasil Maximor (1957) ©<br/>         27- Joe Vansuch (1998) ©<br/>         27- Michael Guorgiadis (1952) ©<br/>         28- John Anos (1936) ©<br/>         28- Vasil Vasilagas (1959) ©<br/>         28- Helen Lis (2024)<br/>         29- George O'Shenic, Jr. (1986) ©<br/>         30- Archpriest John Mason (2019)<br/>         30- Stephen Kurtos (1965) ©<br/>         31- Edward Bartek (1983)<br/>         31- Olga Venslavsky (2003) ©</p> |
|---|---|

### 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Epistle, Sunday Before)

But you 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.

### Mark 1:1-8 (Gospel, Sunday Before)

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."

## JANUARY Celebrations

### *Birthday*

- 1- Beth Hull
- 2 Stella Jane Zelinsky
- 3 Terri Konik
- 6 Karen Simko / Faith Simko
- 7 Lueleta Dardovski / Luke Clark / Charles Wilfong
- 10 Elizabeth Willison
- 11 Ronald Allen Fredericks
- 12 Patricia Pethtel
- 14- Nobby Kennedy
- 15 James Bufalini / Ron Luthern
- 19 Balaci Kristian / Nicola Nicoloff
- 21 Andrea Stokley
- 22 Stephen Elash / Lorraine Livosky
- 23 Susan Beskid
- 25 Frank Batura
- 26 Mildred Wilfong
- 30 Nadine Todessa
- 31 Julie Dardovski

### *Anniversary*

- 01-02-05 Diaconate Ordination of AP Andrew Bartek
- 16-2023 His Grace Nikodhim Bishop of Boston & Albanian Diocese
- 24-2015 AB Daniel of Chicago & the Diocese of the Mid-west
- 25-2020 His Grace Bishop Alexis Bishop of Sitka & Alaska
- 26- Fr. James Gleason Anniversary to the Holy Priesthood

### *Names Day*

- 2 Retired Bishop Seraphim of Sendai / Julia Simko

### *Nativity Letter con't from pg 2*

Our expectation mounted during the forefeast, and crescendoed with the Vesperal Liturgy and Vigil of Christmas Eve.

Now, upon us who sat for those forty days in great darkness, an even greater Light has shone forth (Is. 9:2). Our Hope has come; our Expectation has arrived.

The one whom we awaited in the dark and silence is now manifest to us in the same dark and silence—the dark and cold of midnight, in the black and moonless night of our sin, in the deep cleft of the cave, contained in the trough of the manger. But, despite the darkness pressing all around, he shines, a clear and pure and innocent Light. Despite the pressing silence, his very presence, his very identity, is that of Word, the Word, the Word that was in the beginning (Jn. 1:1).

He is the Light shining on us from the Father; he is the Father's Word to the human race. He is the fulfillment, source, and sustenance of all our hopes.

His light is the light of purity, of unearthly and all-giving love. His word is a word of peace—not a duplicitous, hypocritical, self-serving peace full of false comfort such as the world gives (Jn. 14:27), but true

peace, peace with God, the peace of the Cross. And his hope, unthinkable to the earthly-minded, is the hope of unending life that is not like this life: it is a life fully given to the Other, fully given to God, a life unconcerned with passing pleasures and fading achievements, but solely with self-giving communion and self-emptying love.

The birth of this holy Infant, our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, the Light and Word and Peace of God, takes place not only in a cave of stone: it is also takes place in the soul of every one of the elect. To become worthy dwelling-places for this hidden light, we have spent forty days in preparation, and today, Christ is born unto us; unto us a Child is given (Is. 9:6). And, in him, all our hopes are fulfilled. The One born of the Virgin speaks to us in one of St. Nikolai Velimirovic's Prayers by the Lake:

I am thy tomorrow, from today until the end of time. Everything good that thou hast been expecting from the days of tomorrow is within me. Today, thy tomorrow is fulfilled in me. And no day, from now until the last day, will bring thee what I am bringing thee. Lo, I am the day that has no beginning and no end.

I am the treasury of every future that exists and I am the way to that treasury. The future in its entirety cannot give thee so much as a kernel of good, unless it borrows from me.

Thus, with his Nativity—in Bethlehem and in the heart—Christ is with us, bringing every good, every blessing, with him.

But, in another sense, we are still waiting: our entire life is a period of Advent, a period of watching for the coming of Christ. If he is born in a hidden way in our soul in this age, nevertheless we await the full and definitive revelation of his unimaginable splendor in the age to come, when the elect will be revealed as shining vessels of his presence forever. Thus, our whole life is a period of joyful waiting, expecting the fullness of the Joy which we already know in part.

“Hopelessness sits idle. But my hope cleans and washes continually; it airs out and censes the quarters where it will receive thee,” says St. Nikolai in another of his prayers. And the greatest expression of this expectation of ours is precisely prayer itself. Again, as St. Nikolai says: “Prayer is necessary for me lest I lose sight of the salvation-bearing star, but the star does not need it to keep from losing me.” Moreover, prayer is not merely an expression of expectation, of longing, of hope: it is also the path to fulfilling those expectations. The more we pray, the more we open ourselves up to the action of the divine energies, to communion with the Divinity, the more our expectations are fulfilled, even in this life.

Therefore, as we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, let us gather in spirit before his crib and pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, ***Finished next Pg***

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### *Nativity Letter con't from previous pg*

who art everywhere present and fillest all things, come and make thy presence known in us.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, born of the Virgin for our salvation, come and be born anew in our heart.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, born in our heart through thy holy Mysteries, come and dwell with us forever.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Child given unto thy faithful, who art with thy Church always, even unto the end of the age, make us to be worthy dwelling-places for thee in the endless ages to come, when thou, together with thy Father and thine All-Holy Spirit, shalt abide in thine elect as Light and Peace unto the ages of ages. Amen.

With my blessing and prayers for all of you on this most joyous feast,  
Sincerely yours in the newborn Christ,

+ Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

## **Metropolitan Tikhon Announces Significant Leadership Appointments in the New Year**

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, today announced several significant leadership appointments that will take effect January 1, 2025.

Archpriest Alexander Rentel, who has served as Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America since January 2019, has been appointed as rector of Three Hierarchs Chapel in Yonkers, NY. In his appointment, Fr. Alexander will simultaneously resume his teaching position at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, where he has been a distinguished faculty member since 2004. In his expanded role at the Seminary, Fr. Alexander has also accepted the position of Chief Operating Officer, working in close collaboration with Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie, who currently serves as both Dean and interim President of the institution.

This transition will conclude Fr. Alexander's tenure as Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, a position in which he has served with distinction for the past six years. During his chancellorship, Fr. Alexander has overseen numerous important initiatives and helped guide the Church through significant challenges, including the global pandemic period and the initial steps of the relocation of the Chancery to the territory of the Archdiocese of Washington. He also worked to maintain and strengthen relationships between the Orthodox Church in America and the other local Orthodox Churches.

"Fr. Alexander's dedication and unwavering commitment to the Orthodox Church in America has been exemplary," stated Metropolitan Tikhon. "His careful stewardship as Chancellor has strengthened our church administration, and I am deeply grateful that he will continue to serve the Church through his new responsibilities at Three Hierarchs Chapel and St. Vladimir's Seminary, both of which are stavropegial institutions under my direct oversight."

Metropolitan Tikhon has appointed Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino to serve as Chancellor, effective January 1, 2025. Fr. Alessandro, who will maintain his current role as Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America, will serve in this capacity during this interim period until a permanent Chancellor can be selected following the 21st All-American Council. "I am confident that while the next few months will be particularly busy with the upcoming canonization of Matushka Olga and the 21st All-American Council, the Chancery will continue to function professionally and effectively under the leadership of Fr. Alessandro," stated Metropolitan Tikhon.

### *Year in review con't from Pg 4*

also busy offering their skills to enrich one another for the benefit of the communities. The St. Andrew of Crete Music Ministry had a full and successful musical workshop in Dayton, OH. The Clergy Wives group held several retreats offering support and prayer to one another. The Diocese also conducted the 10th Small Parish Forum, gathering strong participation from within and beyond the diocese. Children's camps continued to offer sessions throughout the year, both in the summer and winter. These efforts provided educational, spiritual, and fun opportunities for the youth of the diocese to engage with their faith. The DOM also offered scholarships to the children of the diocese to attend these camps through the Archbishop Job Memorial Fund.

In the past year, the diocese also experienced the loss of His Grace Bishop Matthias, Archpriest Moses Berry, and Archpriest Alexis Fedec. This past year the diocese also marked the fifteenth anniversary of the passing of Archbishop Job (Osacky). May their memory be eternal!

Much good has come from the past year inspiring the hopes of those in this diocese, while also creating challenges for our continued effort. May God continue to bless and strengthen our hierarchy, Archbishop Daniel, our clergy and faithful in the upcoming year, assisting us in keeping our eyes on our home – the Heavenly Kingdom.

## **Bulletin Corrections or Errors**

Updates and corrections have been made according to the information provided me. If anyone finds an error in the bulletin, please don't hesitate to contact Fr. Andrew.

## **Announcement Regarding Matushka Olga's Canonization Services and Feast Day**

Meeting in its regular Fall Session under the presidency of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America made several decisions related to the upcoming canonization of Matushka Olga.

The Holy Synod has decided that Matushka Olga's liturgical glorification will take place at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Kwethluk, AK, with the Vigil and Glorification taking place on the evening of Thursday, June 19, 2025. Divine Liturgy will be celebrated in Kwethluk on Friday, June 20, 2025.

Celebrations of the glorification will continue with services at St. Innocent Cathedral in Anchorage for the Sunday of All Saints of North America, Saturday, June 21 - Sunday, June 22. Finally, a capstone celebration will take place of the 21st All-American Council in Phoenix, AZ, on July 16 - 17, 2025.

Additionally, the Holy Synod has clarified and confirmed that Matushka Olga's feast day will henceforth be celebrated annually on October 27 (Revised Julian; Julian October 27 / November 9), with the first celebration taking place in temples of the Orthodox Church in America on October 26 - 27, 2025. The Synod further decreed that our righteous mother Olga shall be commemorated with a Doxology-rank celebration, except in the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska, where her memory may be celebrated with a Vigil.

NOTE: Matushka Olga's liturgical feast will be October 27, shared with the holy martyr Nestor, the day after the commemoration of the holy great martyr Demetrius, regardless of whether the Revised Julian or Julian calendar is used. Accordingly, following the pattern for most saints and feasts, churches using the Julian calendar will celebrate her feast thirteen days after churches that celebrate according to the Revised Julian.

### **ARCHPASTORAL GREETINGS OF THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST ON THE RADIANT FEAST OF OUR LORD'S NATIVITY – 25 DECEMBER 2024**

Make ready, O Bethlehem! Let the manger be prepared! Let the cave show its welcome! The Truth comes and the shadow flees. God is born of a Virgin and is revealed to men. He is clothed in our flesh and makes it divine. Therefore Adam is renewed and cries out with Eve: "Thy favor has appeared on earth, O Lord, for the salvation of the human race."  
(from the Royal Hours of the Nativity of Christ)

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Monastics, and Beloved Faithful,

"God is born of a Virgin and is revealed to men": as we sing these words, we recall the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Gathering in these holy days to celebrate in the churches and chapels throughout our Diocese, to reflect upon this great mystery, let us also turn our thoughts to the one who was instrumental in fulfilling God's plan for our salvation: Mary, the "One who gave birth to God the Word" and "truly Theotokos."

We are first introduced to Mary of Nazareth at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke when, just after having spoken her "yes" to the angel in the moment of the Annunciation, she begins her trip "in great haste" from her hometown of Nazareth to the hill country of Judah, to be with her elderly relative Elizabeth in her time of need. The angel Gabriel had revealed to Mary that Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy (Luke 1:26-38). This explains why Mary, who carried within her an even greater mystery, goes to see Elizabeth and stays with her for three months, until Elizabeth gives birth to John, the Forerunner and Baptizer of Christ.

In the meeting between these two women, it is the young one, Mary, who offers the first greeting. The Gospel tells us: "she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (Luke 1:40). After this greeting, Elizabeth feels enveloped in great wonder as she is filled with the Holy Spirit. This wonder and joy is echoed in her response to Mary: "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

In celebrating the Nativity, we ourselves are called to recognize the moments of the miraculous which are part of our daily lives. And what are these miraculous moments in everyday life? The first place is in the other, in those around us, in whom we recognize a brother or sister, because since the birth of Jesus occurred, every human face is marked with the image of the Son of God. Above all, we encounter this miraculous presence of Christ in the face of the poor, because God Himself entered the world poor, and it was to the poor, in the first place, that He revealed Himself.

Another place in which we recognize the miraculous is within history, the chronicle of human life and experience. However, we run the risk of reading history backwards and outside of its Christian context. For example, we generally think that history is defined by the rise and fall of governments, wars and conflicts, regulated by business and finances, and dominated by the powers of this world. But it is God, the God of Creation who entered human life, who defines and rules over human history. As Mary sings in the Magnificat, it is the Lord who puts down the mighty from their thrones and exalts those of low degree, who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty (Luke 1:52-53). **Finished Next Pg**



### **AB Daniel Christmas letter con't from previous pg**

Yet another miraculous encounter is within the Church. To perceive the Church as miraculous means not limiting oneself to consider it only as a religious institution, but to embrace the Church as a mother who, despite any blemishes and wrinkles, allows the features of the beloved Bride of Christ the Lord to shine through—a Church that is able to recognize the signs of faithful love that God continuously sends her. This is the Church that always has her doors open wide, and her arms open to welcome everyone. Moreover, the Church, our Mother, goes out from her own doors to seek with a loving smile and warm embrace all those who are far off in order to bring them to the mercy of God. The Church herself provides this miraculous moment which we are invited to experience in these holydays of light and love.

God has given us all of Himself by giving His Only Son, who is all His joy. It is only with the heart of Mary, the humble and poor daughter of Zion, who became the Mother of the Son of the Most High, that it is possible to rejoice and be glad for the great gift of God and for His unpredictable surprise. Through the birth of Jesus, may she help us to perceive the miraculous which surrounds us every day—in our brothers and sisters, in the lived experience of history, and within the Church. In the birth of Jesus may we recognize the Gift of Gifts, the undeserved Gift who brings us His salvation.

In the spiritual atmosphere of joy and peace of the Nativity of Christ, I greet all of you with the joy of the Feast. Once again, I state my prayerful wish for peace: peace in families and homes, peace in parishes, peace in the ministry of our clergy and faithful, and peace for those who are suffering the horrors of war throughout the world, especially our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and in the Middle East.

As you gather with family, with your parish communities, and with all your loved ones, I send you my sincere fatherly greetings and archpastoral blessings. May the Lord grant you a bright and blessed celebration of the Birth of Christ and a New Year filled with an abundance of heavenly blessings.

**CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!**

With love in the Incarnate Son of God,

**DANIEL**

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

### **Informational Presentation on Human Trafficking**

An informational presentation on Human Trafficking will take place:

When: Saturday, January 18 from Noon till 2

Where: St Demetrios Community Center  
3223 Atlantic St., NE, Warren, OH

Free Admission & open to the public & refreshments

### **Thank you from the Wilson Family (at Seminary)**

Thank You, immensely, for your intentional love and support to us as seminarians during this Nativity season! Your generosity in gifts has truly blown us away and made our Christmas very bright. Our children are especially excited! May you have a blessed Nativity.

In Christ,  
Irenaeus, Ruth, Ester, Ezra, Edyth, & Ephraim Wilson.

### **Why Do Orthodox Christians Have their Homes Blessed?**

**by Phyllis Meshel Onest (ROCOR CHURCH IN ARIZONA)**

#### **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 censuring 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.)*

**Finished Next Pg**

### **Why Homes blessed con't from previous Pg**

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 6/19). 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, offices & school dorm rooms 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!

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## **2024 - COUNCIL MEMBERS**

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