

## Message from Fr. George for December 30, 2022



On Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, Fr. George offered a Divine Liturgy in commemoration of the Feast Day of *St. Nicholas the Wonderworker* – the patron saint of children and sailors. He was born in present-day Turkey and his life is the inspiration for the legend of Santa Claus.

His icon is featured above, along with a

photo of Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus! They never seem to age, and they continue to bring joy to our youth.

Also pictured above is a thankful Grandmother with her extraordinary Granddaughter, preparing for her baptism in January. Perhaps you or a family member would like to serve as a Godparent in the future? Let Fr. George know. A Godparent receives a spiritual gift not unlike the care and mercy of St. Nicholas, and of Santa Claus. In turn, a Godparent is a steward of our Incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ, Who is seen welcoming the children in the above photo in our church. Let us support all our youth.



On Christmas Eve and Christmas mornings, our church was filled with faithful parishioners seeking to honor the Blessed Nativity of our Incarnate Lord and Savior. At the end of the Christmas Liturgy, Fr. George surprised everyone by presenting a *“Zoom Town Hall”* whose aim was to connect our friends and parishioners around the world – from The Czech Republic, from Crete, Greece, from Fernandina Beach, FL, from those vacationing in Gatlinburg, TN, and others whom Fr. George was informed would be away. In turn, he and Presbytera Marinda were surprised with a special Christmas Gift provided from our Parish Council members and the Altar Servers. They express their deep appreciation for this generous and thoughtful gift and thank God for the privilege of serving you.

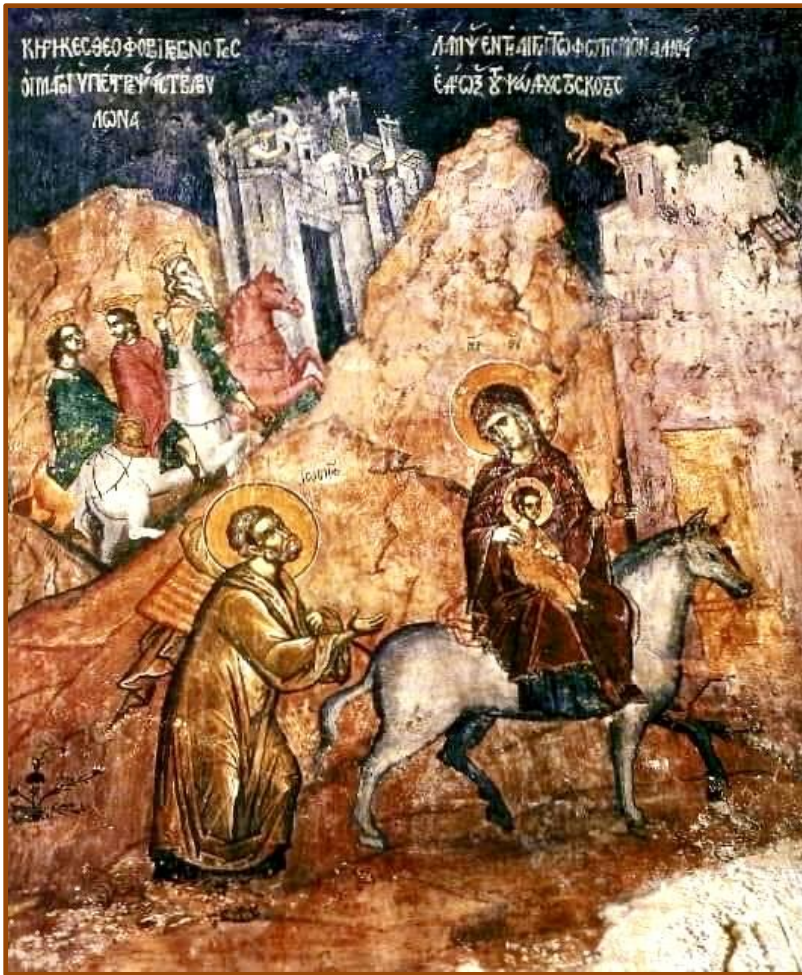




It was then Fr. George's turn to surprise all our parishioners on Christmas morning by distributing a gift he made for those present... *a nutritional Italian hazelnut cookie featured above.*

The cookie's name is "*Brutti Ma Buoni*" which means "*ugly but good!*" Light and crispy on the outside, it is soft and chewy candied hazelnut on its inside. Along with his cookies above is a cherished photo that Jeanie Ellinas shared with Fr. George depicting her and Johnny's Nativity Scene outside their home. One could easily observe that the physical location of Jesus' actual birth in the cave/stable was "ugly", but the salvific ramifications were nothing short of "good" and we could say "the best gift" – lasting forever, granting us riches beyond hope, and assuring us of life with our Incarnate Lord forever and ever! *Christ is born! Glorify Him!*

## An Incident From Christ's Life As A Divine Infant



When the holy family escaped Herod's sword and was traveling to Egypt, some thieves appeared on their way, intending to rob the travelers.

The righteous Joseph was leading the donkey, on which their few possessions were loaded and on which the Blessed Virgin was riding, holding her Son by her chest.

The robbers grabbed the donkey to ride it away, and one of them approached the Mother of God to see what she was holding.

As soon as he saw the infant Christ, he was amazed by His unusual beauty and then, in his astonishment, he exclaimed:

*And if God took human flesh, He could not be more beautiful than this Child!*

Then the bandit ordered his accomplices not to take anything from these travelers.

Full of gratitude to this generous robber, the Virgin Mary said to him:

*Know that this Child will reward you with a great gift because you protected Him today.*



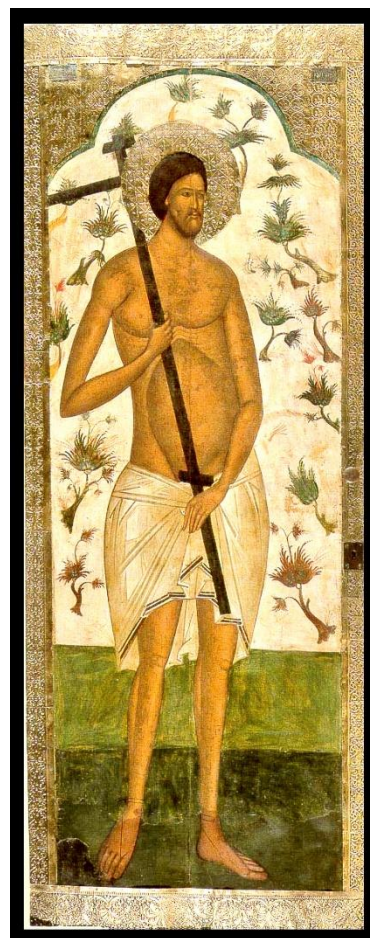
Thirty-three years later the same man was hanging on the Cross, for his transgressions, crucified to the right of the Cross of Christ.

His name was Dysmas and the name of the other robber, on the left, was Gestas.

Seeing the Master, the innocent and sinless Jesus Christ crucified, Dysmas repented for every evil he had done in his life.

When Gestas blasphemed against the Lord, Dysmas defended Him saying: *This man did nothing unseemly.* (Luke: 23:41)

Dysmas was therefore the wise robber to whom our Christ said: *Amen, I say unto you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.* (Luke. 23:43)

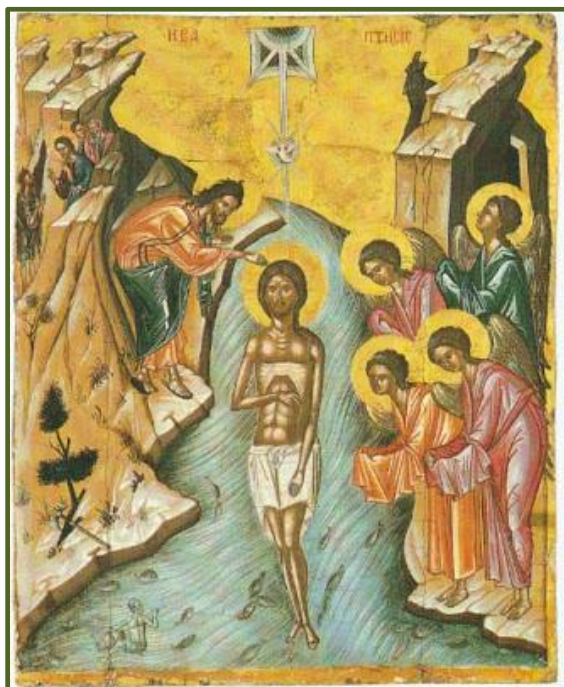


*The Lord gave Paradise to the one who gave Him life when He was a Child!*

**+ St. Nicholas Velimirovich**

“If you live for  
the next world,  
you get this one  
in the deal;  
but if you live only  
for this world,  
you lose them both.”

— C.S. Lewis



## Services Leading Up to and after The Holy Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ

*Join us with your family & friends.*

### Thursday, January 5 (Eve of the Holy Theophany of our Lord – Strict Fast Day):

**8:00 a.m. Great Hours of Holy Theophany**

**9:30 a.m. Vespertal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with the Great Blessing of the Water**

### Friday, January 6 (Holy Theophany of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ):

**9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom with the Great Blessing of the Water**

### Saturday, January 7 (Synaxis of John, the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner):

**4:45 p.m. Blessing of the Water at our Ebenezer Road Property**

**5:30 p.m. Annual Vasilopita Dinner & Auction at All Saints Anglican Church**

### Sunday, January 8 (Sunday After the Holy Theophany of our Lord):

**7:45 a.m. Orthros**

**9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy, followed by Parish Council Oath of Office**

**11:00 a.m. Religious Education Classes (for all ages)**

**12:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting**



As we have arrived at the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> year of our parish history, we thank you for your faithful prayers and steadfast support. Our parish will be planning a GALA later this year to celebrate our progress. Likewise, we will be seeking your support to finalize our building plans.

In thanksgiving and respect for God's rich blessings on our parish family, we will be "going to the desert", so to speak on the Feast of St. John the Baptist (January 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:45 p.m.) by traveling to our church property on Ebenezer Road to bless and sanctify its land and water during the Holy Theophany Season. *We cordially invite you and your family to join us for this brief and historic service to sanctify God's creation entrusted to us. Antidoron prepared for the Feast of St. John the Baptist will be distributed in thanksgiving to all present and signify the bounty we have received.*

At 5:15 p.m., we will depart promptly and drive a few blocks to All Saints Anglican Church for our Annual Vasilopita Dinner & Auction scheduled for 5:30 p.m. *In case of rain or severe cold weather, Fr. George will offer the Blessing at All Saints Church. Mark your calendars and join us!*





On Sunday, November 20, Fr. George blessed the animals of our parishioners and friends with the Prayer of St. Modestos of Jerusalem. His Feast Day was December 16<sup>th</sup>. On Christmas, one family shared how their beloved cat, Twilight, had behaved so well and was extra loving ever since the blessing. They are pictured in the photos above.



*...Lord, grant our pets health, strength, and happiness, so that their owners, having received so many blessings from their animals, may also go out and be a blessing to others and glorify You always. Amen!*