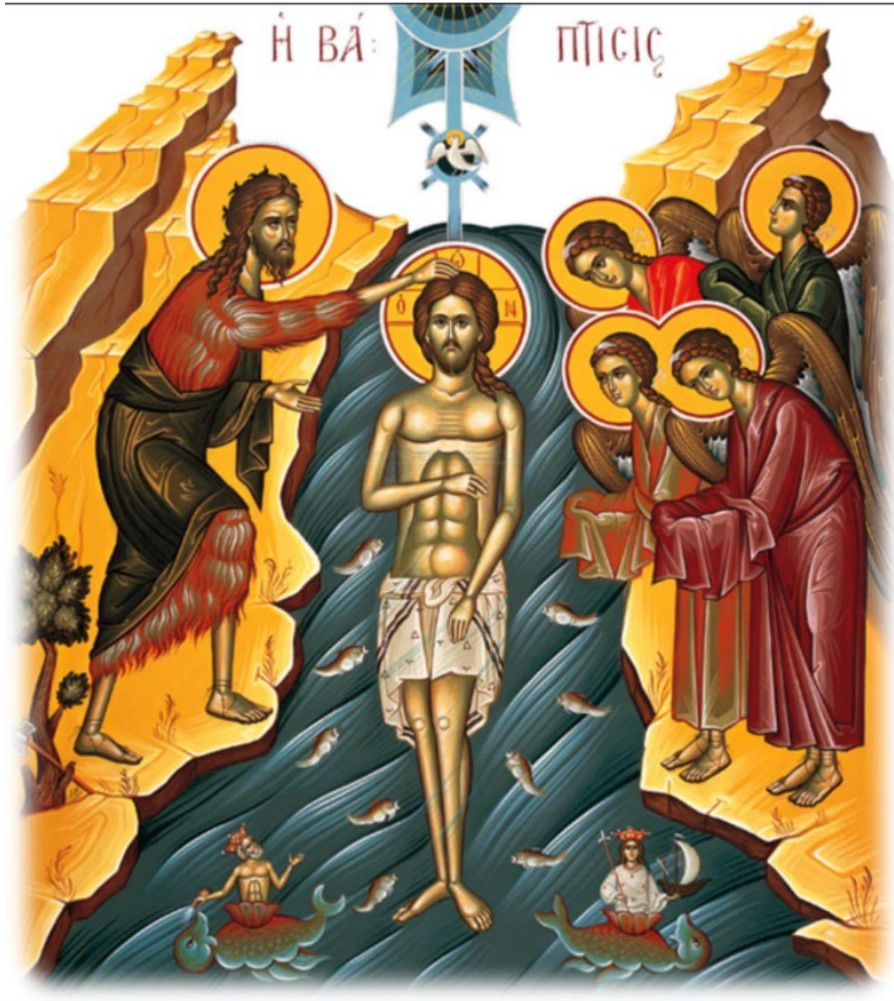


## Pastoral Message from Fr. George for 1.12.24

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*With the great Feast of Theophany, we celebrate the rebirth of our own nature wounded by sin. We also rejoice in the liberation of the created world from demonic domination. On this most holy of days, our Redeemer Christ recreates the tarnished Adam on the waters of the Jordan, crushing the power of the Devil. The Church invites all of us to hasten and receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the fullness of awe toward God. We are called to*

*accept Christ, who is manifested in glory as “the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:9).*

*In addition to the significance of Christ’s Baptism for the more general redemption and sanctification of creation, the Church from the beginning also highlighted the specific importance of the sanctification of the waters. That is why the great Feast of Theophany is connected to the service of the Great Blessing of the Waters (in Greek, Μεγάλος Αγιασμός), an important sacrament in its own right, which is conducted together with the Divine Liturgy, as an extension of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.*

*The Great Blessing of the Waters is theologically very meaningful because it clearly reveals the sanctification of both the material creation and its deliverance from corruption, which was caused by the Fall and the rebellion against the Creator. The Lord, with His Baptism in the waters of the Jordan, sanctifies the waters and all of nature. “Today the substance of water is made holy...” we chant at the beginning of the Great Blessing, and the priest petitions that the water be sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is our hope and desire that the Holy Water blessed this year may be for the sanctification of those who receive it. May their souls be cleansed of their sins, and may their bodies be protected from every disease. May they be enlightened with the knowledge of the true God. Also, may the Holy Water protect Christians from all the actions of Satan, and may their homes be blessed and sanctified. May the Divine Light of Christ fully manifested in Glory guide the entire course of our lives. Amen. [From Archdiocese Department of Religious Education]*



Many people get a greenhouse to have a place to start their seeds. They enable gardeners to take advantage of the opportunity to get growing early. With a bit of effort and patience, they'll be eating vegetables from their gardens by summer. Before spring, it is important for gardeners to think about what seeds will be planted in our gardens. Then, we can start seedlings in our greenhouse by first preparing the potting soil and then sowing seeds directly in our containers. We will water and monitor them and ultimately transplant them outside.



The same is true for clergy – just as gardeners plant seeds that can be harvested for food – ministers seek to supply spiritual food for their flock to enable them to stay healthy both physically and spiritually and help them minister to others. Along those lines, I found in my spiritual greenhouse the following story that reflects the impact a teacher made in the outlook of her students that lasted their entire lives.

One day a teacher asked her students to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then she told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down. It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed in the papers.



That Saturday, the teacher wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday she gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. “Really?” she heard whispered. “I never knew that I meant anything to anyone!” and, “I didn't know others liked me so much,” were most of the comments.

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. The teacher never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another. That group of students moved on.

Several years later, one of the students was killed in Vietnam and his teacher attended the funeral of that special student. She had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. He looked so handsome, so mature.

The church was packed with his friends. One by one those who loved him took a last walk by the coffin. The teacher was the last one to bless the coffin. As she stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to her. “Were you Mark's math teacher?” he asked. She nodded: Yes.” Then he said: “Mark talked about you a lot.”

After the funeral, most of Mark's former classmates went together to a luncheon. Mark's mother and father were there, obviously waiting to speak with his teacher. “We want to show you something,” his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket “They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it.”

Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded, and refolded many times. The teacher knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which she had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him. "Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said. "As you can see, Mark treasured it."

All of Mark's former classmates started to gather around. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home."

Chuck's wife said, "Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary."

Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vicki said and without batting an eyelash, she continued: "I think we all saved our lists."

That's when the teacher finally sat down and cried. She cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again. The density of people in society is so thick that we forget that life will end one day. And we don't know when that one day will be.

So please, tell the people you love and care for, that they are special and important. Tell them, before it is too late. Rather than pass up the wonderful opportunity to do something nice and beautiful let someone know you care for them and remind them of the importance of your relationship. Remember, you reap what you sow. What you put into the lives of others comes back into your own.

*Rivers do not drink their own water;  
trees do not eat their own fruit;  
the sun does not shine on itself,  
and flowers do not spread  
their fragrance for themselves.*

*LIVING FOR OTHERS  
IS A RULE OF NATURE.*

*We are all born to help each other.  
Life is good when you are happy;  
but much better when others  
are happy because of you.*

Pope  
Francis

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[from this image with Fr. George](#)

**January 10, Feast of St. Gregory of Nyssa  
(Archangel Michael Chapel)**

**8:00 Orthros & Divine Liturgy**

**January 13**

**5:00 Vasilopita Dinner & Auction**

**January 14, Leave-Taking of the Feast of the  
Theophany of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ**

**7:45 Orthros**

**9:00 Divine Liturgy**

**10:15 Memorial Service – Nick Christodouloupoulos**

**January 18, Feast of Saints Athanasios & Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria**

**9:00 Divine Liturgy**

**January 21, 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of St. Luke**

**7:45 Orthros**

**9:00 Divine Liturgy, Parish Council Oath of Office**

**10:45 Religious Education Classes (*for all ages*)**

**Noon Parish Council Meeting**

