

The Holy Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

*(celebrated with fasting Vigil tomorrow
& Feast on Tuesday, January 6)*



S A I N T C H R I S T O P H E R H E L L E N I C O R T H O D O X C H U R C H

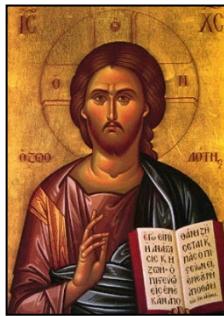
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St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church



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Very Rev. Fr. George J. Tsahakis, *Chancellor*

Liturgical Guide for Sunday, January 4, 2026

ON THIS DAY, THE SUNDAY BEFORE & THE FOREFEAST OF THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, we commemorate the Synaxis (collective celebration) of the Holy Glorious 70 Apostles; the Righteous Theoctistus, Abbot of Curomo in Sicily; Nikephoros the Leper; Zosimos the Monk and Athanasios the Notary; Righteous Appolinaria of the Senator; Martyrs Chrysanthos and Euphemia; Righteous Euthymios the Younger; New Martyr Onuphrios; Righteous Euthymios of Vatopedi; Righteous John Scholarios; and Eustathios, Archbishop of Serbia. *Through their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.*

Welcome, Visitors and Newcomers, to our Parish!

We invite you to enter your name, mail/email addresses, in our Guest Register (near the entrance) if you are interested in joining and assisting with our mission's development. We want to keep you informed of our schedule and location of services. *You and your family are welcome; we look forward to knowing you. We invite you and your family to join and assist us often!*

Please consider that only baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians in canonical good standing may approach for Holy Communion. All are invited to partake of the Antidoron ("instead of the gifts") distributed at the conclusion of today's Divine Liturgy.

SPECIAL HYMNS SUNG TODAY:

1./2. Resurrectional Hymn (Plagal of the First Tone) – (Hymnal-pp.114-117):

It is sung before and after the Small Entrance: To the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation, let us, the faithful, give praise and worship. For He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death and raise the dead by His glorious resurrection.

3. Special Hymn for the Forefeast of Holy Theophany – (not in Hymnal):

It is sung after the Small Entrance: O Zabulon, prepare, and be ready, Nephthalim. Jordan River, hold your course, and exultantly receive the Master who is coming to be baptized. Adam leap for joy with Eve the Foremother. No longer hide yourselves, as once in Paradise; for having seen you naked He has appeared to clothe you in your former vesture. The Christ has appeared, wishing to renew * the entire creation.

4. Hymn Commemorating St. Christopher – (see music distributed):

It is sung after the Small Entrance: Made comely with garments woven from your venerable blood, you stand before the Lord, the King of Heaven and earth, O famed Martyr Christopher. With the choirs of Angels and the Martyrs you chant, singing the thrice-holy hymn and most awesome praises. Thus, by your intercessions with God, save us, your servants.

5 Kontakion for the Forefeast of Holy Theophany – (not in Hymnal):

It is sung after the Small Entrance: To the flowing streams today of River Jordan comes the Lord and cries aloud to John the Baptist, and He says, "Be not afraid to baptize me now; for I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man."

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES FROM TODAY'S ORTHROS & DIVINE LITURGY

The Scriptures were not given us for this only, that we might have them in books, but that we might engrave them on our hearts. – St. John Chrysostom

Gospel Reading During Orthros Service (John 20:11-18)

"But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to Me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God.' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that He had said these things to her."

Epistle Reading During Divine Liturgy (2 Timothy 4:5-8)

⁵As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. ⁶As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for His appearing.

Gospel Reading During Divine Liturgy (Mark 1:1-8)

The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,’” ⁴John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

TODAY'S MEMORY VERSE (TRY TO COMMIT TO MEMORY):

"...prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight..." (Mark 1:3)

The Holy Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ *(continued from Back Cover)*

This depiction is very important, because here we have the revelation of the Holy Trinity to Saint John the Forerunner. From here we will make much

reference to the book by His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos titled *The Despotic Feasts*. The manifestation of the Triune God to man shows among other things that only man is an earthly initiate and worshipper of the Holy Trinity, and the only one created by the Triune God in His image. Saint Gregory Palamas teaches that animals do not have a mind and reason but an animated spirit, that is not self-subsistent, which means that when animals die they lose their spirit, since they don't have essence but only energy. However, man has a reasonable mind and a spirit that animates attached to the body, which is why he alone is in the image of the tripartite God.

Saint Gregory Palamas interprets the phrase “in Whom I am well-pleased” as how the grace of God is one, but sometimes it acts in good pleasure, since God wills it, and sometimes by concession. God knew that the fall of man would take place, and did not create him for this but separated him, because God Himself willed it for man. God does not abolish the freedom of man. So there is the will of God according to good pleasure and the will of God according to concession. With this in mind the affirmation of the Father: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased” shows that the incarnation was the will of God according to good pleasure.

The testimony of God the Father for His Son shows that the Son is the “radiance of the glory of the Father”, since there is a common essence and energy in the Triune God.

The appearance of the Holy Spirit “like a dove” shows us that the Holy Spirit is not a dove, but He appeared as a dove because the Holy Spirit is not created but uncreated like the other persons of the Holy Trinity. That the Holy Spirit together with the voice of the Father sat on Christ shows that the persons of

the Holy Trinity are consubstantial, and it also shows that the Messiah was not Saint John the Forerunner, but Christ.

It is known that Christ had no need for baptism, since the baptism of John led people to become aware of their sins. Christ, writes Saint John of Damascus, was not baptized because He had need for purification, 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. Christ was baptized to crush the heads of the dragons in the water, because it was believed that demons dwell in the water. This is why we see in the icon of the Baptism water monsters that have turned their backs on Christ because of the fire of the deity. Christ was baptized to wash away sin and bury the entire old Adam in the water.

Many icons of the Baptism in conjunction with the hymnography of the feast present Christ completely naked, thus indicating how Christ humbled Himself for the sake of people. He became naked that He may clothe man in an incorruptible garment.

Another main person who took part in the baptism was Saint John the Baptist. He was made worthy by God to hear the voice of the Father, and to see the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The “and behold the heavens were opened to Him” of Matthew the Evangelist, and the “He saw the heavens tear apart” of Mark the Evangelist indicate the superiority of the uncreated over the created, as well as the restoration of an “open” relationship between God and man after its “closure” due to sin.

Many things can be said based on the teachings of the Fathers of the Church regarding a theological analysis of the icon of the Baptism. My main point though is that Christ gave us each the possibility to acquire the Grace of sonship, a Theophany in our personal life.

Source: *Ekklesiastiki Paremvasi*, "Επεφάνη η χάρις του Θεού η σωτήριος", December 2003. Translated by John Sanidopoulos.

PASTORAL REFLECTION FROM FR. GEORGE:

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

The celebrations of the events of the life of Jesus Christ as they are celebrated today were not instituted at the very beginning of the Christian era; they were held by the believers of the early Church as vivid commemorations without a connection with certain days and hymns, but as a real event of the Lord Who was present in the Church.

Later on, when the Church was firmly established and its believers were free to worship the True God, they decided to commemorate and observe annually in the calendar year the events of the life of the Church and especially those of the Life and Person of Jesus Christ, Whom they worshipped along with the Father and the Holy Spirit with prayers, hymns, and readings appropriate for the occasion. The reason why the first Christians did not institute these celebrations and observances at the very beginning is mainly because of the persecutions of the Church and its believers.

For three entire centuries, the Church of Christ was underground, in catacombs, where under the grass and flowers of the earth was nourished the tree of faith and worship. The Church extended the Kingdom of God to the hearts of its faithful without pompous expressions. These winding underground centers, the catacombs, were both the workshop of the rebirth

of the Christians and also their burial places. It is not our purpose here to develop further the struggles and faith of the early Church of Christ which, since then, has made the Church of the Living God “the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” What we wish to emphasize is that during the first three centuries, the Church of Christ developed a clear ecclesiastical conscience, both in theory and in practice; the Church formulated the principles of faith and worship and defended them with enormous sacrifices, fighting off both external and internal falsifications.

For three centuries, the Church developed its roots under the earth and watered them with the moisture of its catacombs and the blood of its martyrs. The Church spread its roots from Antioch to Rome. Alexandria, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Athens also opened underground centers of the Christian faith which were warmed and brightened by the torches of devotion, sacrifice, and the cultivation of Christian character and conscience.

When the fullness of time came, that is, when the roots were ready to present an incorruptible trunk above the earth, then Divine Providence appointed political conditions and a remarkable personality, Constantine the Great, who not so much from a religious outlook as from a political foresight gave to the Church of Christ the right of free exercise in matters of faith and worship. This action of expediency was initiated and imposed by the emperor.

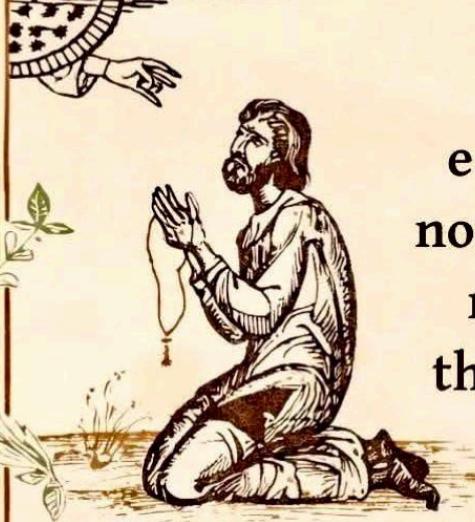
The Church of Christ came out of its refuge from the persecutions armed with the strength of love among its members and equipped for defense and for missionary endeavors. Now the Church could freely apply its principles.

The Church's first concern was the development of its prayer and worship, which ratify the faith and cultivate the relations of its members. This is why the 4th century is the golden link which connects the underground life of the Church with its later course on the surface of the earth. The celebrations of Theophany and Christmas, the writing of divine liturgies, the formulation of faith in the Creed, and so many other incidents are permanent foundations which took place during the 4th century and which developed as flowers springing from roots which had existed beforehand.

The life of the Church has kept the fragrance of these unwithering flowers until today, and their aroma has given to civilization the precious Christian atmosphere which we breathe today. If we of today hold lamps and torches in our hands and in our hearts, this light has been transmitted from the lamps and torches which were held burning by the men and women of the catacombs who gave this inheritance of faith from their hearts. (*from Fr. George Mastrantonis*)

Holy Theophany and the Blessing of the Waters

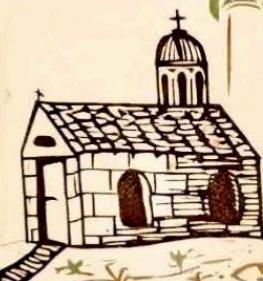
At the end of Monday's and Tuesday's Divine Liturgies, on the Eve of the Feast and Feast of Holy Theophany, respectively, water is blessed and given to the faithful to carry home and use throughout the year. By His Baptism in the Jordan, Jesus Christ touched our lives, the environment, and our whole world, revealing His Divinity and desire to make all things, nature and the world, holy. This is a sign that our lives are precious to the Lord and we are immersed in His love. Following the next two days' Blessings of the Water (*Agiasmos*), *Fr. George* will bless all present. Parishioners may fill their bottles from home or take one from our supply home with them.



Begin
each year
not with the
noise of
the world,

but with the silence
of the soul - seeking
Christ, and all
will be well.

St Ephraim the Syrian



ST. CHRISTOPHER CHURCH

VASILOPITA

DINNER & AUCTION

Saturday, January 10th | 5–8 PM

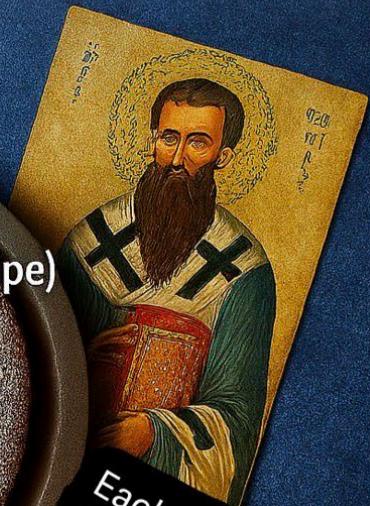
All Saints Church

**PLEASE BRING YOUR
FAVORITE HOMEMADE
BAKED GOODS:**

- Vasilopita
(Make your favorite recipe)
- Seasonal
Cakes & Breads,
- Cookies, Cupcakes,
Pies, and More!

PROCEEDS BENEFIT:
St. Basil's Academy
Bloom Our Youth
Paradise4Kids

Contact Marinda Tsahakis at
678-938-7753 to share what baked
item(s) you are bringing for auction.



Each family is asked
to bring a dinner side
dish that feeds 8.
Meats, desserts, &
beverages are
provided so don't
bring those items.

On this the 1084th Sunday of our St. Christopher's parish community, we continue to thank each of you for your presence and support. Although it may seem like we are just a handful of men, women, and children, if we commit ourselves to serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will experience the miracle of growth as the Holy Spirit brings others into His service to help us build His new church in the Peachtree City, Georgia, area for the glory of God! On behalf of our parish, we thank you. *Your continued support and mutual encouragement are essential and appreciated!*

Join Us Often with Your Family

Sunday, January 4th – Sunday Before Holy Theophany

8:00 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy, Memorial for Nick Christodoulopoulos

Monday, January 5, Vigil on the Forefeast of Holy Theophany (Strict Fast)

8:00 Great Hours, followed by Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great & the Great Blessing of the Waters

Tuesday, January 6, The Theophany of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ

9:00 Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, followed by Great Blessing of the Waters

Wednesday, January 7, Synaxis of John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner

9:00 Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 10 (at all Saints Anglican Church)

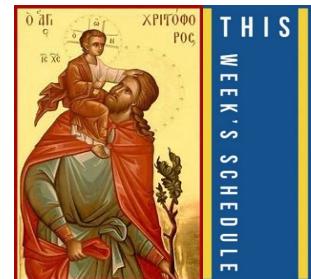
5:00 Philoptochos Vasilopita & Auction (*Bring your baked goods for auction*)

Sunday, January 11, Sunday After Holy Theophany

8:00 **Orthros**; 9:00 Divine Liturgy, Re-scheduled Blessing of Five Loaves & January Commemorations (*We thank Presbytera Marinda and Fr. George for offering the five loaves*), followed by Parish Council Oath of Office

10:45 Religious Education Classes

12:00 Parish Council Meeting



THIS
WEEK'S
SCHEDULE

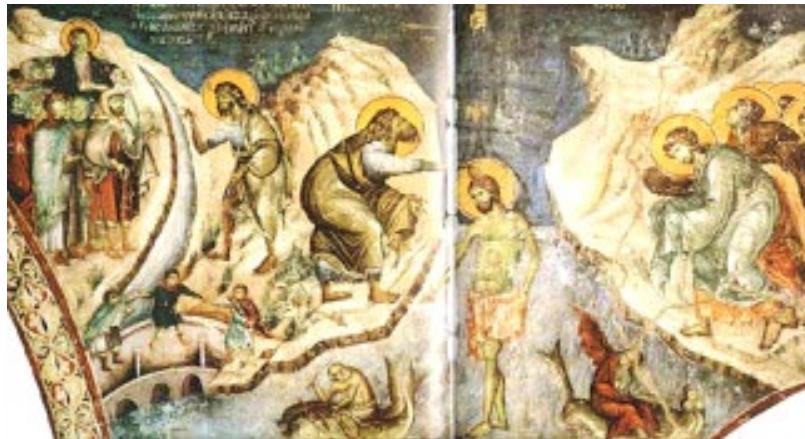
Holy Theophany Icon (front cover)

The following reflection, “*A Theological Analysis of the Iconography of the Theophany / Epiphany*” was written by Hieromonk Silouan Peponakis and is reprinted from www.johnsanidopoulos.com. **+Fr. George Tsahakis**

The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River by John the Forerunner is also called an “epiphany”. The word “Theophany” (manifestation of God) comes from the apostolic passage: “God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16), and is more related to the Nativity of Christ. The word “Epiphany” (appearance) comes from the apostolic passage: “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people” (Tit. 2:11), and refers to the Baptism of Christ, because it was then that people came to know the grace of the Godhead.

With the appearance of the Holy Trinity and the confession of the Honorable Forerunner we have the official confession that the Son and Word of God is “of the Trinity”, Who was incarnated for the salvation of the human race from sin, the devil and death.

It is known that in the ancient Church on this day, January 6th, the feasts of Christmas and Theophany were celebrated together. These feasts were divided in the fourth century, and Christmas was transferred to December 25th. Theophany is also called the Feast of Lights due to the baptism and illumination of catechumens as well as the display of lights.



The icon shown is a fresco from the Sacred Church of Protaton in Karyes of the Holy Mountain, by the paintbrush of the leading artist Michael Panselinos. At the top of the icon there is a hand that blesses in glory. Below this the Holy Spirit is illustrated “like a dove” and just below this Christ is in the waters of the Jordan being

baptized by John the Forerunner, who is not looking at Christ, but has his gaze in the heavens from where he hears the voice of the Father in the Holy Spirit bearing witness: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.”

(continued inside bulletin)