



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PHOENIX

January 2026 eNews

Message from the Bishop



My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we celebrate the great feast of Theophany and the radiant season of house blessings, the Church proclaims with joy:

“Your light, O Lord, has set its seal on us; we recognize You and exclaim to You: You have come and revealed Yourself, O unapproachable Light.”

In the baptism of Christ, God reveals Himself to the world and seals us with His divine light, calling us to live and witness that light in every place we are sent.

Our eparchy, spread across the vast Western United States, exists because we are a missionary Church, bringing the beauty of the Byzantine tradition, the grace of the Divine Liturgy, and the hope of the Gospel to those who seek Christ. In the very first weeks of this year, the Lord has confirmed this in a tangible way through the canonical establishment of three new Missions:

- Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission in Marana, Arizona (January 4)
- Holy Archangel Raphael Mission in Santa Paula, California (January 6)
- Blessed Bishop-Martyr Theodore Romzha Mission in Fort Collins, Colorado (January 18)

These communities are signs of new life and new hope. They also remind us that our eparchy is not sustained by ethnicity or geography alone, but by faith, sacrifice, and a shared commitment to

go forth in peace and serve the Lord.

As the Jubilee Year of Hope (2025) has now concluded, a historic year opened by Pope Francis and closed by Pope Leo XIV, we are reminded that although Holy Doors are closed, God's heart remains forever open and "The Mission Begins!" Now is the time for us to carry that hope forward, together, into the future the Lord is preparing for us.

Thank you for your faith, your prayers, and your generous support.

With my blessing,

✠ Most Reverend Artur Bubnevych

Bishop of the Eparchy of Phoenix

News From the Vatican



The End to the Jubilee Year of Hope

In December, [Pope Leo Celebrated New Year's Eve at the Vatican](#), in preparation for the Closing of the Doors on the Jubilee Year of Hope by acknowledging the tremendous gift the Jubilee Year has been for humanity and the world.

"Let us thank God for the gift of the Jubilee, which has been a great sign of (God's) plan of hope for humanity and the world," Pope Leo said in his homily.

In January, Pope Leo proclaimed 2026 a "Special Year of St. Francis" to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death. During this time of grace, which will extend until January 2027, the faithful are granted the opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence. [EWTN has the full story.](#)



[Above: Pope Leo bowing at the Holy Doors before closing them on the Feast of Theophany.](#)

Source: Catholic Weekly

The Mission Begins!

Bishop Appeals Letters are in the mail. Watch for yours in the coming week!

2026 Bishop's Appeal Message

CHRIST IS BAPTIZED!

IN THE JORDAN!

The 2026 Bishop's Appeal is upon us, and perfectly timed as we celebrate the great feast of Theophany and the radiant season of house blessings. The Church proclaims with joy:

"Your light, O Lord, has set its seal on us; we recognize You and exclaim to You: You have come and revealed Yourself, O unapproachable Light."

In the baptism of Christ, God reveals Himself to the world and seals us with His divine light, calling us to live and witness that light in every place we are sent. This is the spirit in which all are invited the Bishop's Appeal 2026, which runs from

January 15 through May 31, 2026. For this year's Bishop's Appeal, our eparchy-wide goal is \$300,000.

Each household is asked to prayerfully consider a gift of \$300, or whatever amount you are able to offer according to your means. Some will be able to give more, some less. Every gift, offered freely, strengthens the life and mission of our Church.

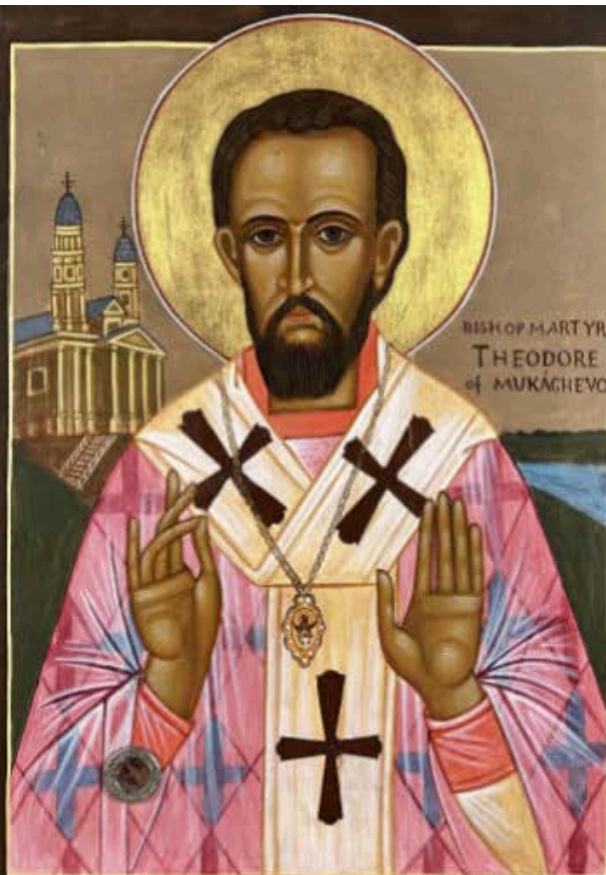
Your generosity directly supports the essential work of our eparchy, including:

- Youth and young adult ministry
- Eastern Christian formation and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- Communication and evangelization
- Retreats and spiritual renewal
- Seminarian education and fostering new vocations
- Strengthening parishes and supporting the eparchial services that serve them

Bishop's Appeal letters were mailed today. Enclosed with this letter is a holy card of Blessed Bishop-Martyr Theodore Romzha. You are asked to keep it close and to seek his intercession for our eparchy, our clergy and faithful, and for the growth of new Missions and vocations.

Donations may be made online using the attached QR code or by visiting ephx.org/appeal. Please be sure to designate the parish to which you would like your donation ascribed to ensure each parish receives the appropriate rebate at the conclusion of the appeal. Parishes that reach their goal will receive a 10% rebate plus 100% of all funds received above their goal.

To donate by check please return the form in your appeal letter and make the check



Prayer for Canonization of Blessed Theodore, Bishop-Martyr

O gracious Lord, in Your infinite goodness You have given us a fearless Bishop, Theodore G. Romzha, who by his uncommon courage, sufferings, and violent death gave a heroic testimony to his unshakable Faith and inspired our people to hold fast to their Faith in a time of persecution. Therefore, we humbly beseech You to glorify Your faithful servant, that man of Faith, Bishop Theodore, and to strengthen our Faith by granting us through his kind intercession [...here make your request].

For You are a merciful and gracious God, and we glorify You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen.

Please, report favors received to the Eparchy of Phoenix, 8131 N16th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85020

payable to: Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix.

Online QR Code:



Coat of Arms

The Eparchy of Phoenix Coat of Arms Explained

While Bishop Artur and all Bishop's have a Coat of Arms, each Eparchy also has its own Coat of Arms. The Coat of Arms of the Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix proclaims the Gospel in the language of icon and liturgy. At its heart is the Theotokos of the Pokrov, the Mother of God standing in prayer and extending her protecting veil. She is the icon of the Church's maternal care and of the Church's mission: she gathers her children, covers them in mercy, and strengthens them for faithful witness. Under her protection we learn to belong to Christ, and from her we learn how to bring Christ to others.



Beneath the icon stands our eparchial motto: "Go Forth in Peace." These words come from the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy. Having encountered the living God, having heard His

Word, and having received the Holy Mysteries, we are sent as disciples into homes, workplaces, schools, and streets to carry the peace of Christ: reconciliation, healing, communion, and hope. The Liturgy does not end; it extends into the world through a people who have been made Eucharistic.

Our missionary life is shaped by the treasures of the Byzantine tradition. Ruthenian chant places the Gospel on the lips and in the heart. Sacred beauty: icons, architecture, and worship preaches without words. The liturgical year forms a people who live in the time of salvation. Fasting and repentance free the heart for love. Byzantine spirituality teaches watchfulness, humility, and mercy, so that the Christian life becomes a transformation in Christ.

Finally, the ocean, desert, and mountains reveal the wide geography across 13 states entrusted to us: from the Pacific and Hawaii to the deserts of Arizona, the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, and the far reaches of Alaska. Across these “four corners” we remain, by nature, a missionary eparchy: welcoming communities, often small and family-like, inviting all people to “come and see” and to enter the Eucharistic fullness of life in Christ. Under the Holy Protection of Mary, we receive the peace of the Lord and we go forth in peace, in the name of the Lord.

From Our Missions & Outreaches

Bishop Artur Visits Hawaii

In December, Bishop Artur visited the Byzantine Catholic Outreach of Honomu, where he baptized three adults and celebrated the Heirarchal Divine Liturgy with the faithful adherents and other interested community members on the Island of Hawaii.





Reflections on Adult Baptism

A Veil Lifted: The Day My Soul Was Renewed.

My baptism was not a moment I simply arrived at, it was a pilgrimage of the heart, years in the making. A journey filled with doubts, with voices that whispered it would never happen, and with the quiet perseverance of those who believed for me when I could not believe for myself. Their faith steadied me, guiding me forward until the day I walked through those doors of the church to be baptized.

When the water touched my skin, something ancient stirred within me. A veil I had carried for so long, heavy, dim, suffocating, it was lifted in an instant. In its place, a light so gentle yet so overwhelming filled every corner of my soul. It was as if the breath of God Himself moved through me, making all things new.

I remember the aromas rising like prayers made visible, the sacred words carried in tones that seemed to vibrate through my bones. I remember the sweetness of the chrism, the warmth of the candles, the chant that wrapped itself around me like a cloak. Every sense awakened. Every moment soaked with grace. It was rapture. Not of emotion alone, but of spirit, lifted higher than I had ever known.

That day became one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. It was not simply an event. It was a

rebirth. A claiming. A homecoming to a faith older and deeper than anything I had known. The faith of the Byzantine Catholic tradition, where heaven is tasted in every fragrance, every icon, every hymn.

I emerged from the waters humbled, strengthened, and awakened.
And though words can never capture the fullness of what happened, I know this:
A darkness ended.
A light began.
And I will never be the same.

May God grant you all, many blessed years filled with love, joy, and the light of Christ!

Christ is Baptized!

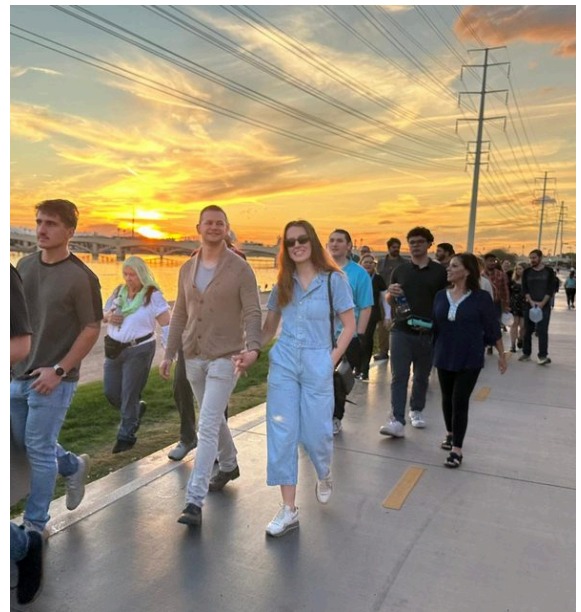
Monday evening, January 5 2026, Bishop Artur and local Arizona clergy and faithful celebrated the Theophany Vigil Vespers with Procession and Great Blessing of Water at Tempe Town Lake in Tempe, AZ.

Among the celebrants were Very Rev. Michael Mandelas, Protosyncellus of the Eparchy of Phoenix and Rector of St. Stephen Cathedral in Phoenix, and Fr Adam Lowe of St. Thomas the Apostle in Gilbert, along with Deacons James Danovich and Michael Hanafin of St. Stephen.

The procession of clergy and faithful began at the parking lot and arrived at the waterside boat launch, after which the Vigil Vespers and Old Testament readings led to the Great Blessing of Water. Numerous parishes from throughout the Eparchy celebrated in a local body of water as well.

St. Stephen's and St. Thomas - Tempe, Arizona





St. George the Great Martyr - Olympia, Washington



Our Lady of Perpetual Help - Albuquerque, New Mexico



St. Nicholas Around the Eparchy

St. Nicholas made his annual visit to parishes around the Eparchy delighting children and adults alike.

Annunciation – Anaheim, California



St. Nicholas of Myra – Anchorage, Alaska



January - Teachers from the early Eastern Church

By Father David Petras

In the month of January, we celebrate the memory of the greatest Father and Teachers of the early Eastern Church: Basil the Great (January 1); Gregory of Nyssa (January 10), Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria (January 18), Maximus the Confessor (January 21) Gregory the Theologian (January 25); John Chrysostom (January 27) and then the Three Holy Bishops (January 30) and also Ephrem the Syrian (January 28). These Fathers together gave us the basic structure of our faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

On January 10, within the Feast of Theophany, we remember St. Gregory of Nyssa. The younger brother of Basil, who made him bishop of the small town of Nyssa, Gregory was not much attracted to administration as to thought and contemplation. He may have been the best Cappadocian theologian, but did not receive the same honor as Gregory the Theologian or Basil, perhaps because he followed Origen in some teachings that were considered suspicious. His commemoration at this time, however, is most appropriate, as he was a great defender of the Trinity and of the Council of Nicea against the Arians. So Gregory writes, "There have been delivered to us in the Gospel three Persons and names through whom the generation of believers takes place, and he who is begotten by this Trinity is equally begotten of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, for thus does the Gospel speak of the Spirit, that 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6), and it 'in Christ' (1 Corinthians 4:15) that Paul begets, and the Father is the 'Father of all.'" Among his writings available in English are: "The Life of Moses," and "From Glory to Glory."

On the 18th, we remember Our Holy Father Athanasius (whose name means "deathless" or "immortal"). He was the architect of the Council of Nicea. He was a pillar of the truth of Christ, showing that Jesus is the Word of God, that "all things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:3-5)" In this way,

he teaches us what really happens in our baptism, we are deified, so that by sharing in the death of Christ through baptism, we share also in his glory and resurrection. St. Athanasius, therefore, explained clearly and simply what is found in Scripture: "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." At his baptism in the Jordan, the fire of the divinity entered the streams of the Jordan, so that the streams of baptism might infuse this fire into our being. The teaching about deification became a part of the Alexandrian school of theology, and Athanasius' successor Cyril would say the same, "For we too are sons and gods by grace, and we have surely been brought to this wonderful and supernatural dignity since we have the Only Begotten Word of God dwelling within us." (On the Unity of Christ. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. p. 80.) We should not make a fundamental mistake about deification, that, because of our faulty ideas about God's omnipotence and omniscience, we should become proud and over-bearing, as if this were to imitate God. Instead, God revealed humility in becoming a human being, and he displayed infinite love in laying down his life for our sakes. The true God-like person, then, would be humble, patient, compassionate and loving. That is what it truly means to be a baptized Christian, an authentic follower of Christ.

On January 21, we remember our holy Father Maximus the Confessor who has been called the "Father of Byzantine Theology." Though he lived long after the Council of Chalcedon, he perhaps drew out the full importance of its confession that Jesus, the Son of God was one in essence with the Father, and yet also united in essence with us in his human nature. Here we see what the gospel stories of Christ's birth and baptism are truly revealing to us. We call the incarnation, the assumption of the Word of God of human nature, a mystery. This is because we cannot wrap our human minds around this theological reality. To form mental concepts, which we might call "ideologies" are dangerous because they skew the reality. Before Maximus, some theologians put so much emphasis on Christ's humanity that his divinity was compromised (for example, Arianism or Nestorianism). On the other hand, some put so much weight on his divinity that Jesus ended up as simply God "rattling around" in a human vessel. These tensions still exist today as theological thinkers try to grasp what cannot be grasped and end up with an "incredible" (in the true sense of the word) Christ. St. Maximus taught that the Son of God was a full human being, with a created human soul, human mind and human will. This has practical consequences. If indeed the Word of God is incarnate in a human body and soul, mind and will, with a human genealogy (Mary was of the House of David) and a human history. If indeed he has interacted with us in word and sight (as a human being, we can make an image, "icon" of his appearance), then all that we are and have as human beings enters into a relationship with God that transforms us into sharers of the divine nature. And so St. Maximus teaches us: "God made us so that we might become 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4) and sharers in His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him (cf. 1 John 3:2) through deification by grace Christianity is an entirely new way of being human."

On January 30: we celebrate the memory of the great and holy three Bishops. Each of these bishops has a feastday in January: Basil the Great (January 1), Gregory the Theologian (January 25) and John the Golden-Mouth (January 27, but this common feast reveals their contrasts. In an earlier reading, we saw that God gives a diversity of gifts to people: "And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13, the Sunday after Theophany)" All three were wonderful theologians, but Basil was the administrator, the man of action, the builder of houses of charity and monasteries; Gregory was a failure at administration, but he was the thinker, the theologian who could bring together the Christian mystery for the solid faith of the people of God; John was the great communicator (if I may use that title), the man with the "golden mouth," who was able to inspire Christian life among his flock. All three were men who loved and cared for the people, but they had a diversity of gifts. This is important for each of us. We all together make up the Church and each of us has a talent to add for the "building up of the body of Christ." This is something each of us who is baptized must do in the grace of the Holy Spirit. So St. Paul preaches to the community, "In every way I have shown you that

by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

Upcoming Events



ByzanTeen Youth Rally Registration Opens in January

Early registration for the ByzanTEEN Youth Rally 2026, happening July 9-12, 2026, in Cleveland, Ohio, **opens in January 2026**, with an "Early Bird" discount for registrations completed before April 1st. You can find details and the registration link in the January newsletter and online at ephx.org when registration opens.

Key Details:

- **When:** July 9–12, 2026.
- **Where:** John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio.
- **Who:** Eastern Catholic teens, ages 13-18.
- **Early Bird Deadline:** Before April 1, 2026.

Bishop Artur to concelebrate Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at St. Joseph Maronite Church

On **Saturday, January 17th 2026**, [St. Joseph Maronite Church](#) in Phoenix (just west of Scottsdale) has invited our Ruthenian Church to celebrate a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy commemorating St. Sharbel and the 10th Anniversary of the miraculous healing of a woman healed of blindness. A large

relic of St. Sharbel is being brought from Lebanon for veneration. **The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy will be at 11:00 a.m.** All are welcome to come and participate in the Divine Liturgy, commemorate St. Sharbel and venerate his relic. St. Sharbel pray for us!

About Saint Sharbel

Saint Sharbel (sometimes called Charbel) was born in Lebanon on May 8, 1828 and died on December 24, 1898. He became a Maronite hermit monk and gained a reputation for holiness due to his devotion to the Holy Eucharist & the Blessed Mother.

He is known as a miracle worker for the many healings attributed to his intercession. One of those miracles occurred right here at the Shrine of Saint Charbel in Phoenix: [here is the story](#).

He is the patron saint of Lebanon: his feast day is celebrated on the third Sunday in July (Maronite Calendar); or July 24 (Roman Calendar).

About the Shrine of Saint Charbel at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Phoenix:

St Joseph's erected a large Shrine to St Sharbel that was dedicated by His Excellency A Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Los Angeles on March 26, 2017.

NOTE: This is obviously most relevant to those local to the area with parishioners who would be most likely to attend, [please let them know about this](#). To those in areas further away, it may still be of interest depending on any potential travel plans that might bring them close, devotion to St. Sharbel, the activity of our bishop. We will share information, when available, regarding the travel of the large relic of St. Sharbel in the western states.



The Byzantine Catholic
Eparchy of Phoenix
Bishop Artur Bubnevych

www.ephx.org
8105 North 16th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85020

Donation Link

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