

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, January 3, 2021

Sunday Before Theophany

Apostolic Reading: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

Tone 5 • Matins Gospel 8

➔ For COVID Guidelines, [click here](#)

➔ For Live Streaming Link, [click here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY will be held on the Even of the Feast, **TUESDAY EVENING, January 5th, at 6:00 pm with a Vespertine Divine Liturgy followed by the Great Blessing of Water. The Feast of Theophany, of God's self-revelation when John baptized our Lord in the Jordan, It is, after Pascha, the greatest Feast Day of the year. We look forward to praying with you on this wonderful occasion.**

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, January 7th at 7:00 pm (via video conference). Parish Council Members, please let [George Demake](#) know if you are unable to participate.

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS who staffed our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center last Saturday. Our next Saturday is February 6, 2021. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please e-mail [Nicole Apostola](mailto:nicole.apostola@gmail.com) at nicole.apostola@gmail.com.

THE 2021 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both [English](#) and [Romanian](#). Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs. If you know someone who is unable to come to Church but would like a calendar, please pick one up for them.

A NEW PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION WILL BE HELD IN JANUARY. Following Archdiocesan procedures, the Parish Council has formed a Nominating Committee to propose a slate of candidates. George Demake is the Chair of that Committee. If you would like to serve, or if you would like to nominate someone for the Parish Council, please [e-mail him](#).

DON'T FORGET to send in your **2020 Stewardship contribution**. If you haven't done so already, please send it in as soon as possible.

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICES. You may attend Liturgy on Sundays at church. **Of course the usual COVID rules apply**. Here are the [Guidelines](#) for attending Church services. Please follow the directions of ushers for everyone's safety.

WE ARE LIVE-STREAMING THE LITURGY. If you can not physically attend church, you may access the live-stream of Divine Services. Go to: www.stnicholaschurch.org and click on "**Live Streaming of Services**." To view previous Services on our YouTube Channel, [click here](#).

WE HAVE A COVID FUND. There are people both in our parish and in the larger community who are in need during this time. **If you need help**, whatever it might be, including financial assistance, please contact Fr. Nick. We'll find a way to assist you. **ALSO**, we are asking the faithful in our parish **WHO ARE ABLE**, to perhaps contribute toward this fund. We've set up a small committee, headed by Fr. Nick, to administer this fund, and distribute what we're able to give as equitably as possible. **May God keep us all!**

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATE—Holy Trinity is experiencing residents and staff testing positive with Covid. Presently, there are 5 residents and 3 staff members positive. All residents and staff continue to be tested every 3 days, per State guidelines. Holy Trinity is not accepting any new admissions at this time per guidance of DPH. Visitations are still not allowed at this time. A date when the Covid vaccine will be available at Holy Trinity has not been given by the State. When it arrives it will be announced.

VISITATIONS— There are no changes in the visitation policy. For the protection of residents and family members, all in-person visits are suspended.

A WARM WELCOME to the new interim CEO: Judith Nazaire. Given Covid protocols it will be a challenge for her to meet all of us, yet, we can all offer her our prayers for her success.

JOB OPENINGS – Holy Trinity is hiring, and the staff is excellent to work with. At present, there is an opening for Director of Maintenance. Also, openings for entry level housekeepers for multiple shifts; nurses and CNAs all shifts. [Click here](#) for a full listing with detailed job descriptions. People familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

TREASURED GENERATIONS ANNUAL APPEAL— This year has been a difficult one for Holy Trinity's staff and residents. Now, more than ever, we need your help. If you wish to donate to the Treasured Generations fund please click [here](#). Every gift helps. And, we thank you for your support!

DIVINE LITURGY celebrations have been suspended until the current Covid spike has been contained.

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

O Master, Lord our God, the Fountain of life and immortality, the Creator of all things both visible and invisible, who governs the seasons and the years and guides all things with Your wise providence; we thank You for all the blessings You have poured out upon us during the past year of our lives, and we beg You, O all-bountiful Lord, bless this coming year with Your goodness. Direct our civil authorities in the path of goodness, bestow Your heavenly blessings upon all Your people: health, salvation, and growth in virtue. Deliver Your Holy Church and this city from every assault of the devil, and grant us peace and tranquility. Remember Your Holy Church, strengthen and establish Her, enlarge Her and give Her peace, preserving Her forever unscathed by the gates of hell and impregnable against all the assaults of visible and invisible enemies.

Deliver us throughout the coming year, and all the days of our life, from famine, earthquakes, flood, epidemics, hail, fire, the sword, the invasion of enemies, and from civil war, from sudden and unprovided death, from sickness, calamity, and distress, from faithlessness and hard-heartedness, and from grievous temptations; and grant that we may always offer You thanks: the Father who is without beginning, together with Your Only Son, and Your Most Holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit: God glorified in three persons; may we joyfully praise Your all-Holy Name. Amen.

Longing for His Appearance

The Epistle Lesson for the Sunday before Theophany is taken from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8. This letter was probably written by Paul while under arrest in Rome. The tone of it reads like a last will and testament. He knows there is almost no possibility of release. On the contrary, it is very likely that he will be put to death. The reason this passage is chosen to be read today, just before Theophany, is a phrase in verse 8 where St. Paul speaks of those who long for the appearance of Christ, His epiphany. Even though it is the Lord's second-coming to which Paul is referring in this verse, it still has meaning when we think about God's self-revelation on January 6th at Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan by John's hand.

Knowing that Timothy is worried, if not grieved, over St. Paul's situation, he wants to offer words of both comfort and encouragement. He says to Timothy, "always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully" (v. 5). He wants Timothy, who in many ways he considers his heir in ministry, to focus on the task at hand, namely his ministry. He tells

him to “be sober.” Other translations use words such as ‘watchful’ and ‘steady.’ What St. Paul is saying is that Timothy should be absolutely resolute, unaffected by winds that may blow.

He then advises him on the difficulties of ministry. He doesn’t mince words. He tells him directly: “endure suffering.” Ministry has always had its challenges. In times of persecution it can mean imprisonment, torture and even a horrible death, the kind of death St. Paul himself was facing. Even in peaceful times grief and affliction can come even from ‘faithful’ members of one’s own community. St. Paul is offering Timothy some very practical advice for someone who wants to preach the Gospel.

“Do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.” Here he is speaking of preaching the Gospel faithfully; being true to the message given us by the Lord Himself.

Then St. Paul turns to his own situation. He wants Timothy to understand that he is clear about what will happen to him and rejoices in it. It is the fulfillment of his life. St. Paul uses two different metaphors to help Timothy understand. The first is the holy sacrifices offered to God. The second is the sacrifice of a warrior or athlete.

“I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come” (v. 6). A libation is a liquid offering, usually wine or oil. Unlike other kinds of sacrifices or offerings where only a portion was offered up, a libation was poured out totally. St. Paul is telling Timothy that his whole life has been such an offering. He is also telling him that he realizes the time for his total sacrifice is at hand. This image was certainly not lost on Timothy.

Then he introduces the metaphor of an athlete: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day.” Any athlete knows what it means to compete. He or she must train. Training means sacrifice — giving up things that one might like to do — in order to achieve the desired goal. This is not the only place where St. Paul compares the physical sacrifice of an athlete to the commitment and discipline needed for the spiritual struggle. It is very apt, because it gives concrete form to a contest that is by definition ethereal. It helps us to understand the importance of regular and faithful spiritual “training” using the exercises given us, such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. By putting our faith into practice through these and other similar activities, we enable our whole person to become a true reflection of whom and what God created us to be.

However, in this verse St. Paul is speaking not of the beginning of the race, but its end. Having “kept the faith,” he tells us, “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” (v. 8). In St. Paul’s day, the winner of the race received a laurel crown. In the spiritual race, he envisions not a crown of leaves, but one woven with branches of virtue.

He says that this same crown awaits not only him, but “all who have longed for his appearing.” I said at the outset that this verse is the reason why this reading is chosen for today, to prepare us for the Feast of the Lord’s Epiphany. The Greek word “epiphany” (appearance or

manifestation) was frequently used to describe the “manifestations” of pagan gods, or emperors making divine claims. St. Paul uses it to speak of the Lord’s Incarnation or, as in this case, His Second Coming.

Each morning at the opening of the Matins service we sing: “God is the Lord, and has revealed (epiphany) Himself to us! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Psalm 118). God revealed Himself not only in the past: to Abraham and the Patriarchs, to Moses and the Prophets, to the Apostles and the Saints. He reveals Himself to us each morning, each time we awaken from the death of sleep. In this same Psalm we say, “I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord” (v. 118:17). To know God is to live. God reveals Himself so that we can share in His life.

In just a few days we will celebrate that event where God reveals Himself in the fullness of His Tri-Personal reality: Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus in the Jordan hears the voice of His Father while the Holy Spirit descends as a dove. This is joy for all who have longed for his appearing!

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Orthodox Links

[Romanian Orthodox Metropolia](#) of the Americas
[Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America](#) (Assembly of Bishops)
[International Orthodox Christian Charities](#) (IOCC)
[Orthodox Christian Mission Center](#) (OCMC)
[Orthodox Christian Radio Network](#) (OCN)
[Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches of Central Mass.](#) (CEOC)

Dates To Remember

Friday, January 1 — St. Basil/New Year's, Lit. 10:00 am
Saturday, January 2 — Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon

Tuesday, January 5 — Theophany Eve
— Vesperal Liturgy, 6:00 pm
— Great Blessing of Water, following Liturgy

Wednesday, January 6 — Feast of Theophany
Thursday, January 7 — Parish Council Meeting

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Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am