

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, January 2, 2022

The Sunday before Theophany

Apostolic Reading: 2 Timothy 4:5-8
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

Tone 3 • Resurrection Gospel 6

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

[\(Click here for a PDF version of this week's news\)](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING SERVICES FOR THE NEW YEAR AND THEOPHANY ARE:

- Saturday, January 1st. Circumcision of our Lord & St. Basil: Matins 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am ([Streaming](#)).
- Sunday, January 2nd. Sunday before Theophany: Matins 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am ([Streaming](#)).
- Wednesday, January 5th. Vespers Liturgy with Great Blessing of Water: 6:00 pm ([Streaming](#)).

THE FULL CHRISTMAS/THEOPHANY SCHEDULE. [DOWNLOAD BY CLICKING HERE.](#)

ALSO THIS SUNDAY, JANUARY 2ND:

- **THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT** which will be held after the end of the Divine Liturgy.
- **THE PARISH PHOTOGRAPH** after the Pageant.

FOOD PANTRY THIS SATURDAY, JANUARY 1st. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **this Saturday, January 1st from 9 am - noon.** It is a great blessing to help those who could use the help. So, if you're open to sharing a small part of your Saturday morning, please e-mail Nicole Apostola at nicole.apostola@gmail.com. She can give you more details. You'll see what a difference it makes.

METROPOLITAN NICOLAE'S PASTORAL LETTER on the Feast of our Lord's Nativity may be downloaded here: in [ENGLISH](#) and in [ROMANIAN](#). **Please take a few minute to read his inspiring words.**

THE 2022 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs.

The Town of Shrewsbury has issued a MASKING ORDER. Masks are required in all indoor spaces, including Churches. We are now asking that all persons attending the Divine Services wear masks until is order is lifted.

HOUSE BLESSING

WE CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY this week. We mark the great self-revelation of God at the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the River Jordan by the hand of St. John the Baptist. We partake in the miracle of water restored and sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit through prayer. We then take God's gift and bless ourselves, our family, our homes, our work places — in short, everything. The local priest, often assisted by faithful parishioners, travels from place to place to spread and share this sanctification. This is the way it usually happens.

But these are not usual times. We are in the middle of a pandemic, and this current variant seems to spread much more quickly and easily. It does not seem prudent or safe to bless homes as we normally do.

However, there is a solution. Each one of us can take the water sanctified at the Great Blessing of Water and bless our own homes. This is an ancient and beautiful practice of our Church. Perhaps many of you have seen pious members of your family bless their homes on a regular basis. You can and should do this yourselves as well.

We've prepared a sheet with simple instructions and a service to follow. [You may download it here](#). If you would like Fr. Nick to come and bless your house, you may either [e-mail](#) him or call him at 508-335-7378, to set up a specific time.

Never forget, God is always with us! And please, return your extra Holy Water bottles.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ALL THINGS ORTHODOX is a weekly show hosted by Fr. Christopher Stamas of St. Spyridon Cathedral. Fr. Chris interviews people active in the life of the Church on questions of faith and action. It is aired on the **Worcester Cable channel 194** on **Mondays** at 7 pm, **Saturdays** at 8 pm and **Sundays** at 9 pm. Also look for it on the Cable website: wccatv.com, or the Worcester TV Roku app.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

HOLY TRINITY

- Has been awarded a 4-star ranking by CMS
- Specializes in short-term rehabilitation with the goal of getting residents back to the community as quickly as possible.
- Is committed to providing exceptional care in a patient-centered environment. Whether residents are there for a short or long-term stay, all aspects of care are focused on meeting the individual's recovery goals.

LONG TERM CARE. Holy Trinity offers long-term care and end-of-life services. Knowledgeable and compassionate care is provided for long-term residents with chronic illnesses, dementia and other conditions. Residents are assisted to achieve as much independence as possible while enjoying the highest quality of life. Compassionate and dignified end-of-life services are also provided in a comforting, supportive environment.

SUB-ACUTE TRANSITIONAL CARE. Holy Trinity provides caring, compassionate, and skilled care in a nurturing environment to patients needing additional recovery time after a hospitalization, with staff experienced in caring for even the most serious health conditions and diagnoses. Interdisciplinary care plans play a vital role in ensuring that residents' physical, emotional and spiritual needs are met and that rehabilitation goals are attained.

We specialize in caring for patients with cardiovascular disease, neurological conditions, such as stroke, and post-surgical needs.

STAY CONNECTED. Be sure to like our [Facebook page](#) for frequent updates and photos.

You can now find us at www.holytrinityrehab.org!

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)

A Prayer for the New Year

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: Father without beginning, together with Your Only Son, and Your Most Holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit, God glorified in three persons, always now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

The Waters Saw You, God, They Were Afraid

This is the Sunday before the Feast of the Theophany. Theophany is a Greek word meaning “God’s Revelation or Appearance.” This holiday celebrates the Lord’s Baptism in the Jordan River by the hand of the forerunner and Baptizer John. After Pascha and Pentecost, it is the most important Feast on the Christian calendar. It also concludes the twelve-day celebration of the early life of our Lord. (These are the “Twelve Days of Christmas” that we sing about: Christmas to Epiphany, *not* the twelve days preceding Christmas!) In His thirtieth year, the Lord came to the Jordan to receive baptism by John and so inaugurate His earthly ministry. This is Scriptural importance of the Feast we keep. For most of us, we particularly remember this holiday because we bless water and the priest comes to visit and bless our homes.

On many levels Theophany is a special Feast and close to our hearts, or at least it should be. Above of all, there is no more basic element necessary for our existence than water. Life as we know it would not be possible without water. Human beings are composed of around 60% water. We were formed in the water of our mother’s womb. If we believe the scientists, we evolved out of the water. When we read Scripture we are told that water was created from the beginning (Genesis 1:2). Water is central to our existence. It is not surprising that God’s first act of salvation was to save the water, to restore it.

You might wonder: “How does this work exactly?” “What does it mean to ‘save’ the water?” We can find a hint in one of the hymns we sing during this Feast. In it we find the River Jordan speaking to us. In answer to the question as to why it stopped its flow when the Lord stepped in to be baptized, the Jordan says, “I am not used to washing him who is clean; I have not learned to bathe the sinless, but to purge the filthy. Christ who is baptized in me teaches me to burn the thorns of sin.” The hymnographer uses a poetic device of giving voice to a force of nature, namely the Jordan. The hymnographer explains to us that water’s nature — to clean that which is filthy — has been finally fulfilled. Because Christ entered the Jordan, water doesn’t clean just our outward dirt, it cleans our inner spiritual dirt as well.

Scripture and theological reflection agree that restoring water’s ultimate purpose was a necessary pre-condition for our own salvation. Our fate and that of the whole of creation are inextricably bound together. We and the whole of creation are deeply interrelated and interdependent. St. Paul reflects on this question in his Letter to the Romans, when he says: “the whole creation has been groaning in travail” (Romans 8:22) waiting for our liberation. Today, we know a great deal more about the extent of the effect human activity has on the world around us than did St. Paul. Yet, his fundamental observation was exactly on target: human sin has had a devastating effect on the Creation God entrusted to us. Creation is trapped by our sin. Global warming, the pollution and poisoning of our environment, the exploitation of natural resources — all these and more are the outgrowth of our greed and our sin. Water needs a Savior. If we are going to be restored to Grace, it must by necessity begin through water.

Christ descends into the waters of the Jordan as a way of restoring the primordial harmony between God and Creation, and between Creation and human beings. It is a powerful sign when we bless the water, asking God to restore it to its original beauty. It is a powerful sign when we take this restored water and drink it, sprinkle it, and use it to restore all of Creation, as our Lord has charged us to do. Through our baptism we are all priests of Creation. We are all called by our baptism to restore harmony between Creation and God, between us and the rest of the created order. This is what Adam and Eve failed to do in the Garden. This is what we as Christians continue to do at every Divine Liturgy, and so many other holy services.

A small point that you might want to take note of is that in the hymns and prayers of this Feast we hear that the Jordan “stopped its flow.” Of course this may be just poetry — each of the Gospel accounts clearly says that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan — but the intent is to remind us of other Biblical events associated with the Jordan River, such as when Joshua commanded the Ark of the Covenant to be carried over the Jordan and when it touch the water the riverbed became dry (Joshua 4:1-23), or when the prophet Elisha, after the ascent of Elijah in the fiery chariot, parted the Jordan by striking it with Elijah’s mantle (2 Kings 2:1-15ff).

Finally, we should always remain in awe of our Lord’s humility. The baptism John offered was a baptism of repentance. Can we even attempt to imagine what this might mean that the God who created all that is, descends into the waters of Jordan to receive this washing from the very hand that He created? It is like when at the Mystical Supper the Lord washes the feet of His disciples. Each of us complains at times about some act of servitude that we are forced to endure (washing dishes? shoveling the walk?). Can we imagine the depth of God’s love for us as He descends into the Jordan to take our sins on His shoulders?

Here is where we find the meaning of love, self-sacrifice, and yes, salvation, through water.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, Jan 1 New Year's/St. Basil: Matins 9am / Lit. 10am
Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sun, Jan 2 Sunday before Theophany
Children's Christmas Program
Parish Photograph
- Wed, Jan 5 Theophany Eve, Liturgy/Blessing of Water 6pm

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
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www.StNicholasChurch.org
Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am