

ICHC NTKRA SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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CHRIST IS BAPTIZED! IN THE RIVER JORDAN!

January 5, 2014	Sunday before the Theophany of Our Lord	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
	Sunday: The Eve of the Holy Theophany of Our Lord	Water Blessing	12:00 pm
January 6	Monday: The Holy Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
January 11	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
January 12	Sunday after the Theophany of Our Lord	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

This week's Bulletin for the health of Avery, Ashley, Aaron and Nicole Buttino is offered by Sonia Buttino.

Saints of the Day: Martyrs Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia, and Theonas (303). Venerable Syncletica of Alexandria (350). New Hieromartyr Joseph and with him 37 Martyrs (1921). Virgin-martyr Eugenia (1933). New Hieromartyr Priest Sergius (1934). Martyr Matthew (1938). Venerable Symeon of the Pskov Caves (1960). Prophet Micah (9 c. BC). Venerable Apollinaris of Egypt (470). Saints Phosterius the Hermit and Menas of Sinai (6 c.). Venerable Gregory of Crete, Monk (820). Martyr Theoidus. Martyr Sais. Saint Tatiana. New Monk-martyr Romanus of Carpenision, who suffered at Constantinople (1694). New Hieromartyr Romanus of Lacedaemonia (1695). Saint Cera of Kilkeary, Virgin (7 c). Saint Convoyon of Redon, Abbot (+868). Saint Rumon of Tavistock, Bishop and Confessor of Devon (6 c.).

Please remember in your prayers: Abducted nuns and orphans of Saint Tekla Monastery in Syria, Suffering Christians of Egypt, Syria and the Middle East. Bishop BOULOS Yazigi, Bishop YOHANNA Ibrahim, of Aleppo. Archimandrites Alexander, Athanasy, Isidore, Nectarios, Pachomy. Archpriests Jason, John, Vincent. Priests Bohdan, Sergius, Jacobus, Andrij, Vasil, Vasil. Deacons Mark, Demetrios, Philip. Mother Raphaela, Dimitri, Nina, Daniel, Catherine, Helen, Anna, Peter, Helen, Michael, Stephanie, Zara, Nolan, Emelie, Connie, Michael, Ed, Nettie, Maria, Michael, John, James, Nancy, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren, Vincent, Archpriest Leonid, Diane, Abigail.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of John Kowansky were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of John Elnicky and parishioners.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of William, nephew of Father Sergius Willis, Father Edward Higgins, David Johnson, Jerome Tarris, Michelle Anastasia Ray, and Father James Parsells were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of newly-departed Louellen, sister of Father Sergius Willis were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Helen Pearl were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Andre Tirenin were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

The Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of New York and New Jersey Archpastoral Letter for the Feast of the Nativity 2013

Dearly Beloved of Our Diocesan Family:

Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!

"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as sons ... Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."
(Galatians 4: 4-7)

One blessed night two thousand years ago, an event planned from all eternity took place: the All-Powerful God became a helpless Child. In the stillness and obscurity of the little town of Bethlehem, the Lord of Glory came to earth to reveal Himself to men. Think of it! Man was able to see and touch and kiss the very face of God! People were able to know and experience and love the Lord as they never could before! Immanuel was really here: *God with us!*

But, the Son of God came into this world for more than the "awesomeness" that the Incarnation means. He came with both a message and a mission. His message was indeed a powerful and timeless one for each and every one of us. He came to tell every human being: *"I love you ... I forgive you ... I give you eternal life."* Is this not what He meant when the Bible tells us that He said: "Greater love than this has no one, that he lay down his life for his friends ... you are My friends ..." (John 15:13-14). "Your sins are forgiven ... that you may know

that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins ..." (Mark 2:5,10). "I am the Resurrection and the Life ... he who believes in Me, even if he dies, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Christ also came with a mission – to prove to men that these words were really true. He would spend His entire earthly life enduring poverty and homelessness, rejection and loneliness, misunderstanding and betrayal, mockery and persecution, pain and suffering, so that whoever among us would face these same difficulties would know that Jesus has already experienced them as one of us, to show us how great His love for us really is! The Messiah would give up His life voluntarily for us – shed His very blood on the Cross for us – endure death itself for us – for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22) – that we could have the assurance of forgiveness and the possibility of salvation. And, Our Savior would rise on the third day to prove that He is truly the Son of God, become "the first born from the dead" (Colossians 1:18) and open to us the gates of Heaven, so that "those who believe in Him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Thus, to those of us who have ever been hurt by others or rejected, misunderstood or betrayed, picked on or persecuted, felt unwanted or unloved, the Lord says: "I love you ... no matter what you do, I love you with a steadfast love." To those of us who have committed wrongs that the world and perhaps even our beloved family and friends cannot forget, the Prince of Peace whispers: "I forgive, and I forget ... even though your sins may be like scarlet, they will be made white as snow ..." To those who have suffered the passing of a loved one, or who themselves are battling cancer or heart disease, diabetes or arthritis, or who are even now walking "through the valley of the shadow of death," the King of Kings tells us: "Come to Me, and I will give you rest ... they will have life everlasting, and I will raise them up on the last day" (Matthew 11:28, John 6:40).

What incredible meaning this event of God's coming in the flesh as Jesus Christ has to offer us! To reduce Christmas to anything else than what it truly is – to foolishly equate it somehow with decorations and presents, food and fellowship, Frosty and Rudolph – is to miss the message and the mission of "the Son of Man come down from the clouds of Heaven" (Daniel 7:13). It is to lose the meaning of the single greatest event that had ever touched human history, and the single greatest opportunity of one's own life!

What then ought our response to this opportunity be? Gratitude, to be sure! But also, imitation. We must strive to learn about Christ and love Him, obey His commandments and live like He did, seek each day to become more and more like Him, come ever closer to Him and to Heaven in our thoughts, words, and deeds – thinking only what He would think, saying only what He would say, doing only what He would do! We must live what Saint Paul has described: "It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. And the life that I live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

My prayer for you is that the real meaning of Christ's Nativity be yours this holy season, and that your life will be changed forever because that message has truly touched your heart and soul in a special, personal way. And, I pray that all the blessings that come with Our Lord's Birth be yours not only this Christmas Day but throughout the coming new year.

With my prayers, my blessings and my love,

+ **M I C H A E L**

Bishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

A WORD FROM SAINT ISAAC THE SYRIAN

This Christmas night, peace was bestowed upon the whole world; so let no one threaten.

This is the night of the Most Gentle One; let no one be cruel.

This is the night of the Most Humble One; let no one be proud.

Now is the day of joy; let us not revenge.

Now is the day of goodwill; let us not be mean.

In this day of peace let us not be conquered by anger.

Today the Beautiful One impoverished Himself for our sake; so you rich ones, invite the poor to your table.

Today we received a gift for which we did not ask; so let us give alms to those who implore us and beg.

This present day's fast opens the heavenly door to our prayers. Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.

Now the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the seal of Divinity.

HOUSE BLESSING – at your convenience. Please phone Father with suggested dates and times for blessing your home. Your home should be neat and tidy, but don't worry if it isn't perfect.

Prepare a small bowl for holy water and the container of holy water standing ready. Have a candle in a candlestick holder, with matches. It would be good to have an icon ready also. Make a list with people who live in the house on one side, and people departed this life on the other side (either side by side or front and back), marked which is which. Inform Father what to bless and what not (upstairs, downstairs, garage, basement etc.).

As many of the house's residents should be at home that evening as possible so that all may benefit. Turn off the television and any distractions (radios, cd-players, computer games etc.). Someone should be prepared to lead Father from room to room – this person should carry the lit candle. If you don't have holy water, let Father know in advance and he can bring some with him. If you want more than just enough to bless the house, you can fill your containers from the holy water font in church. If you have holy water from last year or older, use it to water your houseplants or pour it out on the ground where no one walks, and we will use fresh holy water.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION - The Annual Parish Meeting will be held February 9, 2014, after Liturgy. All those submitting articles for the printed report for 2013 are asked to turn them in before the end of this month.