

THE TROPHYBEARER

Pastoral Thoughts

Today the Church celebrates Theophany, the great feast of the Lord's Baptism in the Jordan, when God reveals Himself not in symbol or shadow, but in radiant clarity. As the hymns proclaim, "The Trinity was made manifest." The Son stands in the waters, the Father's voice resounds from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. What was hidden is now revealed: the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Christ comes to the Jordan not because He needs repentance, but because we need sanctification. The sinless One enters the waters to heal them, to cleanse creation itself, and to open for us the path of renewal. As Saint Gregory the Theologian teaches, Christ is baptized so that He might "bury the old Adam in the water." The Jordan turns back, not in fear, but in awe before its Creator.

In Theophany, we see the meaning of our own baptism. We are not merely washed; we are illumined. We die and rise with Christ, receiving not only forgiveness but adoption—becoming sons and daughters of the Father by grace. The waters that once symbolized chaos have now become the womb of new life.

The blessing of the waters that follows this feast is not a ritual confined to the church walls. It proclaims that all creation is called to be transfigured. Homes, streets, rivers, and seas are blessed because Christ has entered the world fully and intends to heal it completely. Wherever water flows, it bears witness that God has drawn near.

Theophany also calls us to live as people of revelation. Having received the light, we are sent to reflect it. In a world still shadowed by fear and division, Christians are called to manifest Christ—not loudly, but faithfully; not triumphantly, but humbly; not by words alone, but by lives shaped by repentance, mercy, and love.

As we celebrate this feast, may we remember who we are and whose we are. Having been illumined by Christ, may we walk as children of the light, glorifying the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



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PARISH NEWS

Epistle Readers for January

Anyone wishing to become an Epistle Reader, Please Contact Father Michael

Sunday, January 4, 2026: Sunday before Theophany: Alexa Florence

Sunday, January 11, 2026: Sunday after Theophany: No Liturgy/No Reader

Sunday, January 18, 2026: 12th Sunday of Luke: Georgjean Pitsoulakis

Sunday, January 25, 2026: 15th Sunday of Luke: Kim Eastland

Propshora Makers

January 4, 2026: Open

January 11, 2026: No Liturgy/No Prosphora

January 18, 2026: Open

January 26, 2026: Open

Coffee Hour Hosts

January 4, 2026: Ray and Connie Allen

January 11, 2026: No Liturgy/No Coffee Hour

January 18, 2026: Patricia Andrews

January 26, 2026: Bassam and Lina Assaf

Evening Meal Volunteers

January 21, 2026: Dr. Vickie Pyevich / Nicholas Elias, and Kennedy

February 25, 2026: Susan Coin / Cathy Farrell

March 25, 2026: Kim Eastland / Veronica Tolescu

April 22, 2026: Kathy Begyn / Elaine Amidon

May 27, 2026: Dennis and Nancy Spurgetis

June 24, 2026: Fr. Michael and Presbyteria Maria Constantinides / Doug and Patti Kenyon

Anyone interested in taking part in this worthwhile ministry should contact Mary Winters at 563-726-2880

PARISH COUNCIL SUNDAY DUTY SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY

Sunday, January 4, 2026: Joe Burmeister, Mariellen Crosson, Pete Hadjis, Gus Pappas

Sunday, January 11, 2026: No Liturgy/No Group

Sunday, January 18, 2026: Nick Elias, Ted Pitsoulakis, and Dennis Spurgetis

Sunday, January 26, 2026: Joe Burmeister, Mariellen Crosson, Pete Hadjis, Gus Pappas

VASILOPITA

The community's observance of Vasilopita is impressive. The priest begins the spiritual portion of the observance with a series of supplications for the health and peace of the world. Pieces are cut for Christ and His Holy Church, the Patriarch, Archbishop, Clergy, and Laity, etc. (This tradition is taken from the ancient Christian observance of evening meals within the community.) Many pieces of bread are then distributed to the faithful, and all monies received from this event are sent to the Children's Home of St. Basil's Academy in Garrison, New York. All proceeds from the observance are directed to the needs of the Children's Home, which was founded by St. Basil over 1500 years ago.

Our Vasilopita celebration is on January 18, 2025!

VASILOPITA

We are collecting hats/gloves/mittens/coats for the less fortunate...

If you would like to donate, please place them on the Christmas tree in the Narthex until January 7, 2026.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The Circumcision of the Lord (January 1)

Since the Mosaic Law commands that if a woman give birth to a male child, he should be circumcised in the foreskin of his flesh on the eighth day (Lev. 12:2-3), on this, the eighth day from His Nativity, our Saviour accepted the circumcision commanded by the Law. According to the command of the Angel, He received the Name which is above every name: JESUS, which means "Saviour" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31 and 2:21).

Theophany (January 6)

About the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, John the Forerunner, who was some six months older than Our Saviour according to the flesh and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then our Saviour also came from Galilee to the Jordan and sought and received baptism, though He was the Master and John was but a servant. After that, there came to pass those marvelous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized, and the voice was heard from the Heavens hearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22). The Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated in these events. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," the divine manifestation of God's appearance among men. On this venerable day, the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth, the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens began.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa (January 10)

Saint Gregory, the younger brother of Basil the Great, illustrious in speech and a zealot for the Orthodox Faith, was born in 331. His brother Basil was encouraged by their elder sister Macrina to prefer the service of God to a secular career (see July 19); Saint Gregory was moved in a similar way by his godly mother Emily, who, when Gregory was still a young man, implored him to attend a service in honor of the holy Forty Martyrs at her retreat at Annesi on the River Iris. Saint Gregory came at his mother's bidding, but, wearied by the journey and feeling little zeal, he fell asleep during the service. The Forty Martyrs then appeared to him in a dream, threatening him and reproaching him for his slothfulness. Subsequently, he repented and became highly diligent in the service of God.

Gregory became bishop in 372, and because of his Orthodoxy, he was exiled by Valens in 374, who was of one mind with the Arians. Following Valens's death in 378, Gregory was recalled to the throne by Emperor Gratian. He attended the Local Council of Antioch, which sent him to visit the churches in Arabia and Palestine that had been defiled and ravaged by Arianism. He attended the Second Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 381. Having lived for about sixty years and left behind many remarkable writings, he died about the year 395. The acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council call him 'Father of Fathers.'

Saint Anthony the Great January 17

Saint Anthony, the Father of monks, was born in Egypt in 251 to pious parents who died while he was still young. On hearing the words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21), he immediately put it into action. Distributing to the poor all he had, and fleeing from all the turmoil of the world, he departed to the desert. The manifold temptations he endured continually for the span of twenty years are incredible. His ascetic struggles by day and by night, whereby he mortified the uprisings of the passions and attained to the height of dispassion, surpass the bounds of nature. The report of his deeds of virtue drew such a multitude to follow him that the desert was transformed into a city. At the same time, he became, so to speak, the governor, lawgiver, and master-trainer of all the citizens of this newly formed city.

The cities of the world also enjoyed the fruit of his virtue. When the Christians were being persecuted and put to death under Maximinus in 312, he hastened to their aid and consolation. When the Church was troubled by the Arians, he traveled to Alexandria with zeal in 335. He struggled against them on behalf of Orthodoxy. During this time, by the grace of his words, he also turned many unbelievers to Christ.

Saint Anthony began his ascetic life outside his village of Coma in Upper Egypt, studying the ways of the ascetics and holy men there, and perfecting himself in the virtues of each until he surpassed them all. Desiring to increase his labors, he departed into the desert, and finding an abandoned fortress in the mountain, he made his dwelling in it, training himself in extreme fasting, unceasing prayer, and fierce conflicts with the demons. Here he remained, as mentioned above, about twenty years. Saint Athanasius the Great, who knew him personally and wrote his life, says that he came forth from that fortress "initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God." Afterwards, because of the press of the faithful, who deprived him of his solitude, he was enlightened by God to journey with certain Bedouins, until he came to a mountain in the desert near the Red Sea, where he passed the remaining part of his life.

Saint Athanasius says of him that "his countenance had a great and wonderful grace. This gift also he had from the Saviour. For if he were present in a great company of monks, and any one who did not know him previously wished to see him, immediately coming forward he passed by the rest, and hurried to Anthony, as though attracted by his appearance. Yet neither in height nor breadth was he conspicuous above others, but in the serenity of his manner and the purity of his soul." Thus, passing his life as an example of virtue and a rule for monastics, he reposed on January 17 in the year 356, having lived altogether some 105 years.

His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago
and the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos

Cordially invite you to the 65th Annual



Vasilopita Celebration



January 8 | 6:30 PM

Hosted by St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church
5649 N Sheridan Rd, Chicago, IL 60660

Resp by January 4

Parish Reservations can be made by calling:

(773)-334-4515



We are collecting
hats/gloves/mittens/coats
for the less fortunate...

If you would like to donate,
please place them on the
Christmas tree in the
Narthex until January 7,
2026

2026 JANUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 The Circumcision of Our Lord Saint Basil the Great Fast Free 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great	2 Fast Free	3 Fast Free
4 Sunday before Theophany 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy	5 Eve of Theophany Strict Fast Day 5:00 p.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy followed by the Great Blessing of the Waters	6 The Holy Theophany of our Lord Fast Free 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy *Please Note: The Great Blessing of the Waters will occur following Orthros, as is the ancient Tradition of the Church	7 Synaxis of Saint John the Baptist Fish, wine and oil allowed 8:00 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Assumption	8	9 Fast Day 9:00 a.m. Women's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA)	10
11 Sunday after Theophany 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy @ Assumption NO LITURGY AT SAINT GEORGE!	12	13 7:00 p.m. Zoom Orthodox Study Forum	14 Fast Day 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA) 11:00 a.m. "In-Person" Orthodox Study Forum	15 7:00 p.m. Book Study: Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology by Christos Yannaras both "in-person" and Zoom	16 Fast Day	17
18 12th Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Parish Vasilopita Parish Council Oath of Office Parish Council Election of Officers	19	20 6:30 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	21 Fast Day 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA) 11:00 a.m. "In-Person" Orthodox Study Forum	22 7:00 p.m. Book Study: Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology by Christos Yannaras both "in-person" and Zoom	23 Fast Day	24 Fast Free
25 15th Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School Classes begin following Holy Communion	26	27 7:00 p.m. Zoom Orthodox Study Forum	28 Fast Free 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA) 11:00 a.m. "In-Person" Orthodox Study Forum	29 7:00 p.m. Book Study: Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology by Christos Yannaras both "in-person" and Zoom	30 The Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs 8:00 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy	

FATHER MICHAEL AWAY