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Table of Contents

Between Christmas And.....	pp. 1,3
Guidelines for Theophany	pp. 2, 5
OCMC Corner	p. 4
Holy Theophany Services.....	p. 5
The Orthodox Steward	p. 6
Parish News	p. 7
Come and See	p. 8
St. Gregory the Theologian	p. 9
January Calendar	p. 10
Newsletter Sponsors	p. 11
House Blessings	p. 12

FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

The monthly newsletter of
**Saints Constantine and Helen Greek
Orthodox Church**

Volume X, Issue 1

January, 2018

Between Christmas and . . .

Fr. Stephen Freeman

The Feast of Christmas has, for many, come and gone. The eagerness of children for the day of their presents has now passed and, with it, some of their anxieties. Far from marking Christmas as "Twelve Days" (as the old English Christmas carol notes) many parts of the culture hurry forward, eager to put Christmas in the past. In my childhood, it was generally held within the surrounding Protestant culture that a Christmas Tree had to be removed before New Year's Day, or the result would be "bad luck." This eagerness to be rid of the feast is somewhat comically celebrated in the Elvis Costello-Paddy Maloney song, "The St. Stephen's Day Murders":

*I knew of two sisters
whose name it was
Christmas
And one was named
Dawn of course, the
other one was named
Eve*

*I wonder if they grew
up hating the season
Of the good will that lasts till the Feast of
St. Stephen
For that is the time to eat, drink and be
merry
'Til the beer is all spilled and the whiskey
is flowed
And the whole family tree you neglected
to bury
Are feeding their faces until they explode
There'll be laughter and tears over
Tia Marias
Mixed up with that drink made from
girders*

*The heart of the secular
world is not a belief that
there is no God, but rather
the sense that God
is somewhere else.*

*And it's all we've got left as they draw their
last breath*

*And it's nice for the kids as you finally get
rid of them*

In the St Stephen's Day Murders

The next great feast on the Church's calendar is Theophany, the celebration of Christ's Baptism in the Jordan. For a large portion of modern culture – the feast will pass without notice. Having left Christmas, the world moves back to its comfortable position of "ordinary time."

The Christian year, in our modern experience, is filled with such stretches of ordinary time – the

time between the feasts. It is not uncommon to hear theologians and clergy compare our lives to those of the "Church-in-waiting." It is pointed out that we live "in-between" Christ's first and second coming, and therefore live in an in-between period. The conclusion of

such sermons is to speak about various strategies of waiting. The conclusion also carries an inherent sense of the absence of God.

Such conclusions fit well in a secularized world and appeal to the modern sense of God's absence. The heart of the secular world is not a belief that there is no God, but rather the sense that God is somewhere else. Our world is a "no-man's land," in which all things work according to "natural laws," independent of God. I have

continued on page 3

2018 Parish Calendar

Sat, Jan. 6th	Holy Theophany
Fri, Feb. 2nd	Presentation of our Lord
Sat, Feb. 3rd	Evening in Athens
Sun, Feb. 4th	Godparents Sunday
Sat, Feb. 10th	Sat. of Souls
Sun, Feb. 11th	Meatfare/ Burning of the Mortgage Celebration
Sat, Feb. 17th	2nd Saturday of Souls
Mon, Feb. 19th	Clean Monday, Great Lent Begins
Sat, Feb. 24th	3rd Saturday of Souls
Sun, Mar. 4th	Oratorical Festival
Wed, Mar. 14th	Pan Orthodox Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
Sun, Mar. 25th	Holy Annunciation / Greek Independence Day Lunch
Sat, Mar. 31st	Lazarus Saturday/ Palm Crosses/ Church Clean
Sun, April 1	Palm Sunday
Sun, April 8	Holy Pascha
Sun, April 29th	Spring General Assembly
Sat, May 5th	Evening in Athens
Thurs, May 17	Holy Ascension
Mon, May 21	Sts. Constantine and Helen
Sat, May 26th	Saturday of Souls
Sat, Jun. 2nd	Evening in Athens
Sat, July 7th	Evening in Athens
Sat, Aug. 4th	Evening in Athens
Mon, Aug. 6	Holy Transfiguration
Wed, Aug. 15	Dormition of the Theotokos
Sat. Sept. 1	Evening in Athens
Sat. Oct. 6th	Evening in Athens
Sun, Oct. 28th	Fall General Assembly
Sat, Nov. 3rd	Evening in Athens
Sun, Nov. 11th	Thanksgiving Luncheon/ Parish Council Elections
Sun, Nov. 18th	Stewardship Sunday
Sat, Dec. 1	Evening in Athens
Sat, Dec. 8th	St. Nicholas Festival

Qualifications and Guidelines for the Feast of Theophany

By Metropolitan Nikodemos of Patras

1. Is there a difference between the Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters that is performed on the eve of Theophany on January 5th and that which is performed on the day of the feast on January 6th?

The Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters that is performed on the eve of Theophany and on the day of Theophany is exactly the same.

Some believe incorrectly that supposedly on the eve of Theophany the Service of the "Small" Blessing of the Waters is performed while the "Great" Blessing is performed on the day of the feast. In both cases, however, it is the Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters that is performed. The Service of the Small Blessing of the Waters is performed on the first day of every month, as well as in various circumstances requested by Christians (for the blessing of homes, shops, buildings, establishments, etc.). The Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters is performed only twice a year (the 5th and 6th of January) in churches.



2. Where is the Holy Water from the Great Blessing kept and why?

The Holy Water from the Great Blessing is kept in the church throughout the year. It is not kept without reason. And the reason is none other than for the faithful to "partake" of it under certain circumstances and conditions. A common case is for those who are undergoing repentance and are under a penance from their spiritual father which prevents their participation in the Divine Eucharist, for a certain period of time, and Holy Water from the Great Blessing is traditionally given to them as a blessing and consolation. Nothing impedes a person from receiving Holy Water, as long as they are in a state of "repentance and confession".

It must be understood that the Holy Water from the Great Blessing does not substitute or replace the Divine Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, but brings benefit to those who prepare through repentance, to rid themselves of the obstacles of sin and be found worthy for Communion all the sooner.

3. Can the Holy Water from the Great Blessing that is kept in the home be consumed in a time of illness or to prevent the evil eye or any satanic energy?

The answer is affirmative. The sacred text of the Service of the Great Blessing refers to this, saying: "That this water may become a gift for sanctification, redemption for sins, for the healing of soul and body, and for every meet benefit,... That it may drive away all the cunning devices of our enemies, visible and invisible,... For those who drink therefrom and take home for the sanctification of their homes,... That it may be for those who drink and receive there from in faith a purification for their souls and bodies, let us pray to the Lord."

See also the Prayer to be Free of the Evil Eye: "Remove, drive away and banish every diabolical activity, every satanic attack and every plot, evil curiosity and injury, and the evil eye of mischievous and wicked men from your servant."

Without a doubt, the believer should avoid any outlets of manipulation, such as

Continued on p. 5

previously written about this in articles on the “two-storey universe.” Living “in-between” adds a twist to the two-storey experience: it is rooted in our modern understanding of history and time. It is easy, almost obvious, to think of ourselves as living between major events in the Christian story. Two-thousand years have passed since the resurrection of Christ. Christians continue to wait for His second-coming. How do we not perceive ourselves as living in-between?

St. Gregory Palamas (14th Century) uses an interesting example from the Scriptures that dismantles the “in-between” model that is so common in our modern world. His example comes in a sermon on the Cross (Homily XI). He begins with the assertion that the Cross, though manifest in history at Christ’s Crucifixion, has always been God’s means of salvation – at all times and places.

His example is quite illuminating: Although the man of the sin, the son of lawlessness (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3), by which I mean the Antichrist, has not yet come, the theologian whom Christ loved says, “Even now, beloved, there is antichrist” (cf. 1 John 2:18). In the same way, the Cross existed in the time of our ancestors, even before it was accomplished. The great Paul teaches us absolutely clearly that Antichrist is among us, even though he has not yet come, saying, “His mystery doth already work in you” (cf. 2 Thess. 2:7). In exactly the same way Christ’s Cross was among our forefathers before it came into being, because its mystery was working in them. (Quotation from *The Homilies*). St. Gregory goes on within this homily to illustrate (generally with typological interpretation) how the Cross was present in the lives of the Patriarchs and other righteous “friends of God” within the Old Testament period.

His sense of time recognizes a reality of history, “even though he has not yet come,” but transcends that limitation in recognizing that “his mystery doth already work in you.” And of the Cross “[it] was among our forefathers

before it came into being, because its mystery was working in them.” This understanding of time and history places these categories in a subsidiary position – they are not the frozen, solid stuff of an empty, empirical world. They are a place in which we live – but also a place that is permeated by things that have not even “come into existence.”

St. Gregory’s treatment of these things is rooted in the classical Orthodox understanding of the relation between earth and heaven; past, present and future; and the mystery of the Kingdom of God at work in the world. His universe is distinctly “one-storey.” This understanding also undergirds the Orthodox understanding of eschatology (the study of the “last things”). St. John Chrysostom, in his eucharistic prayer, gives thanks for the Second Coming of Christ in the past tense – not that he is saying that the Second Coming has already occurred in history – but that the Eucharistic celebration stands within the Kingdom of God, such that the Second Coming can be described in the past tense. The Eucharist is the “Marriage Feast of the Lamb,” the “Banquet at the End of the Age.”

To speak of ourselves as living “in-between” is to place history in the primary position, relegating the Kingdom of God to a lower status. It is the essence of secularism. The Kingdom of God is not denied – it is simply placed beyond our reach (as we are placed beyond its reach). The Kingdom, like God Himself, is reduced to an idea. Living “in-between” is part of the loneliness and alienation of the modern Christian. Things are merely things, time is inexorable and impenetrable. There is an anxiety that accompanies all of this that is marked by doubt, argument and opinion. Faith is directed towards things past or things that have not yet happened.

This stands in sharp contrast to St. Paul’s statement in Hebrews: “Faith is the substance (hypostasis) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not

seen” (11:1). The relationship of faith with things “hoped for and not seen” is more than a trust that they will be, more than a longing for what is not. Faith is the very substance of such things.

In earlier postings on faith, I have noted that faith is more than an intellectual or volitional exercise. It is an actual participation (koinonia) with the object (or subject) of faith. To describe faith as the substance of things is to grant a kind of existence to them. And so in Hebrews 11, St. Paul describes the faith of our forefathers (Old Testament) and the impact that the substance of faith had in their lives and world. St. Gregory’s homily echoes this very same phenomenon (indeed he quotes extensively from this chapter in Hebrews).

By faith, we do not live in-between. By faith, we live in a one-storey universe in which the realities of God’s Kingdom may permeate our existence. We are not alone nor need we be alienated. The anxiety that haunts our every step is produced by a false perception – a delusion.

Of course, this is an easy thing to assert, but a difficult thing to live: it is the great struggle of our times. But without this struggle, faith will remain alien to us and we will remain lost “in-between” the worlds, trapped within those things that “are passing away.” Christ has given us something greater. St. Paul says, “But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus...” (Heb. 2:8-9). It is the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit that is made manifest in our feasts – but this is the same Christ who is made manifest in our hearts and who promised to “abide with us.” We do not see Jesus “in-between” but rather as the “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Indeed, He is the Feast of feasts.

Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) Corner



The Orthodox Mission
Team of St. Louis

"The Orthodox Mission Team of St. Louis works to nurture an awareness within our local churches of the need to evangelize, catechize, and support missionary efforts and programs globally."

Greetings from Guatemala!

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." ~Psalm 117:24

Nestled in the western highlands of Guatemala, I awake to the sounds of roosters announcing the coming day. I rise to join the seminarians and fellow long-term missionaries to offer our daily morning prayers with Matins. It is here in Aguacate that I draw on my seminary education and love of singing the hymns of the Church to mentor the parish choir located in the village, as well as to assist as God sees fit in the formation of the young men discerning their call to serve the Church.

We live on the grounds of a vibrant parish under the pastoral care of Fr. Evangelos, which also includes a medical clinic that hosts short-term dental and medical teams throughout the year, a high school, as well as a seminary program to prepare candidates for ordination. Also residing with us are: Chrysostom the parrot, Gerasimus the kitten, Yanko the dog, and even a duck, which all somehow connect us to the cultural rhythm of this gentle rural community.

My first months in the field have been very eventful. Since Pascha, I've continued my studies in Spanish. I have also been meeting on a regular basis with the choir. During Bright Week, we traveled to a parish about an hour away to assist in the mass chrismation of over 150 individuals in the community of Peb'il Pam! It was beautiful to see the entire church draped in the warmth and glow of so many candles representing the light of Christ held by the newly-illuminated!

In April, we also received His Eminence Athenagoras of Mexico City to consecrate our church of Annunciation in Aguacate as the first Orthodox Cathedral in Guatemala! We even offered hospitality to those who traveled vast distances to celebrate with us this great blessing by the welcoming sounds of a mariachi band! What an historic occasion it was to lift up our voices in prayer as the entire town gathered to participate in the consecration of the Cathedral and anointing of the Altar with so many faithful!

St. Symeon, in writing about the anointing of the Altar Table, says the following: "Since the Altar is anointed with the Holy Chrism, which represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Altar Table then becomes a source of Grace to all people through the Sacraments which are celebrated thereon. The Holy Gospel is placed on the Altar, the Holy Relics are within, so we see that the Altar becomes the Altar of Christ, a throne of Glory, the dwelling place of God, and the Tomb of Christ." (source: <http://www.goarch.org>)

I continue to be humbled and amazed by how God continues to be at work here in Guatemala! When I enter the church for services, I often find waiting for me the greetings and hugs from at least a dozen boys patiently waiting the arrival of Fr. Evangelos to receive his blessing to serve as acolytes.

They inspire and remind me of the great responsibility we have here, because it will be the youth serving as acolytes, the choir, and the seminarians who will be the ones to share the Faith and carry forth the Traditions of the Church with future generations.

Thank you for being a part of these ongoing efforts among the Mayan communities in bringing the light of Christ to all! It is only by your prayers and financial support that I am able to participate in these endeavors to grow the Church in Guatemala and Mexico!

With Gratitude,
Jennifer Rice

To learn more about, or support the work of, Ms. Jennifer Rice please visit: <http://www.ocmc.org/JenniferRice>.

Continued from p. 2

"spells", sorcery and other wiles of the devil, but rather as a conscious member of the Church they should resort to the valid "sanctifications" of the Church, such as the Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters as well as the so-called "Small" Blessing of the Waters, and thus they will become a partaker of divine grace through this medium of sanctification.

This assumes, of course, that in homes where the Holy Water of the Great Blessing is kept, the oil lamp will also be burning and will burn at all times, and there will be reverence from the members of the family, from the spouses and the children, and every cause will be avoided that will repel divine grace (such as blasphemies and other shameful things).

4. What is the relationship between fasting and the Holy Water from the Great Blessing?

The historical origins of the Great Blessing is as follows: In the ancient Church on the eve of Theophany - as well as on the eve of Pascha and Pentecost - the baptism of Catechumens took place, namely those who were becoming new Christians. The Sanctification of the Waters for the baptismal ritual was performed at midnight; this introduced the habit, according to St. John Chrysostom, of Christians taking this sanctified water and to either drink it or take it home with them for a blessing and to preserve it throughout the year. "This is the day on which Christ was baptized and through His baptism sanctified the ele-

ment of water. Wherefore, at midnight on this feast, all (faithful) draw of the (holy) water and store it in their homes, because on this day the water is consecrated" (Homily on the Baptism of Christ, PG 49:366).

Later, however, at a time of liturgical decline, the Service of Sanctification was isolated from that of Baptism, although it retained many of its elements. The habit remained for the faithful to take the sanctified water "for the sanctification of their homes", as it says in the sanctification prayer of the Great Blessing Service.

Early on the habit of keeping a fast remained before the feast of Theophany, for two reasons:

First, the two Great Feasts of Christmas and Theophany in the ancient Church were united together, and they were called Theophany or Epiphany, which was celebrated on January 6th (this is still maintained in the Armenian Church today), but St. John Chrysostom separated these two feasts in the fourth century and appointed the Nativity of Christ to be celebrated on December 25th and the Baptism of Christ with the Manifestation of the Holy Trinity on January 6th. Every Despotie Feast is preceded by a fast for the psychosomatic purification of the faithful. Let us remember that fasting has an element of mourning for sins. So when the two feasts were separated, the fast which preceded them moved for that of Christmas, and this is why the Church appointed only one day of fasting on the eve of Theophany as a preparation for the feast, and not

more days because the holy Twelve Days of Christmas are a time of festivity.

Secondly, it was also an ancient habit for those who were about to be baptized to fast, and together with them their sponsors, relatives and other Christians who voluntarily complied to fast "on behalf of the baptismal candidate". Therefore it was not difficult in the minds of the Christians to link the drinking of Holy Water and fasting without any causal relationship between them.

Therefore, to transfer the issue to nowadays, we can say that those who frequently partake of the Holy Mysteries and keep the fasts of our Church, such as that of January 5th, they are ready to drink from the Holy Water of the Great Blessing on January 5th and 6th. Otherwise, there should at least be a fast, as prescribed by one's spiritual father.

Lastly, those who occasionally drink from the Holy Water of the Great Blessing that they keep in their homes, in times of sickness and danger, etc., with or without fasting, let them not abstain from spiritual fasting, that we may "purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

Source: This was published in the diptychs of 1999. Translated by John Sanidopoulos.

Holy Theophany Services 2018

Friday, Jan. 5th:

6 pm Vespers and Divine
Liturgy, Great Blessing
of the Waters

Saturday, Jan. 6th:

9am Matins and Divine
Liturgy, Great Blessing of
the Waters

1:15pm Pan-Orthodox
Outdoor Blessing of the
Waters at Lake 1, Wilmore
Park, St. Louis, MO





THE ORTHODOX STEWARD WHATEVER YOU DO ...



Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men.

As we enter 2018, the short verse above becomes a “theme” for our meditations on what it is to be an Orthodox Christian, an Orthodox Steward. Once again, we note that whatever it is that we are about in this life, is to be done *for the Lord* and not for men. The Orthodox Steward, which is to say, an Orthodox Christian, no longer lives for self, but for God. In Christ God, we live and move and have our being.

Of course, often, when one thinks of “stewardship,” money and giving come to mind. In fact, if you examine most of what comes out about stewardship from just about any source, you’ll find that whatever other themes may be present, the undercurrent is always about money, often suggesting that money and success are the yardsticks. Thus the idea that all kinds of reports should be generated and put forth, records kept, etc. etc.

However, this author doesn’t think it needs to be that complicated.

First, the heart of our life in Christ God is centered in His Body, the Church. Participation in the services of the Church, the Divine Liturgy, and reception of the mysteries are of the essence of a faith that is lived. That is to say: the “rule” is that Sundays and Feast Days are spent in the Church – even though sickness, work, and occasional other things cause us to not be present. And that means in the Nave, not merely on the grounds. Here it is that we are joined, in the present, in the Body of Christ. It is real, not just the stuff of discussions, thoughts or ideals.

Second, whatever we do in work or play, public or private, flows from that which is ours as we are joined in the Body of Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. What I say, what I do, how I act are all grounded in Him, Christ our God and empowered by the Holy Spirit. My dress is modest, my speech is meant to bring peace, my forgiveness is His forgiveness, etc.

Third, and this is the money part, my financial giving begins with first fruit, proportionate giving. In Holy Scripture, the tithe is mentioned. That’s ten percent. Giving can be more, of course. But the key is not to think in terms of what others are doing, or doing dividing up the budget, or of all the stuff I want first, but rather to joyfully offer first fruits, that which is *first*, on the *first day*, *Sunday*, to the Lord. Simple. Even if, for some reason it is a bit less, or more, it is the first.

Sometimes we make things very difficult, don’t we? Often, our lengthy explanations turn out to be smoke screens, defenses of the selfishness and self-centeredness that are so much part of our fallen condition.

Know this: the Lover of Mankind does Love you! And as you walk in His ways not knowing exactly how it will work out, He will never leave us (you) or forsake us (you). We need not point fingers, or ask “what about him/her?” Rejoicing in Christ who has joined us in this present time in this present Church, we can say “Glory to God for All Things!” It isn’t all that complicated, is it?

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men.

PARISH NEWS . . .

**Mark Your Calendar~~~~~ Sunday, February 11th
Following Divine Liturgy:**

Please Join us for the Combined Parish Celebration of:

- ♦ **The Burning of the Mortgage**
- ♦ **Apokreas / Meatfare Luncheon**

(please note, there is NO Evening in Athens in January)

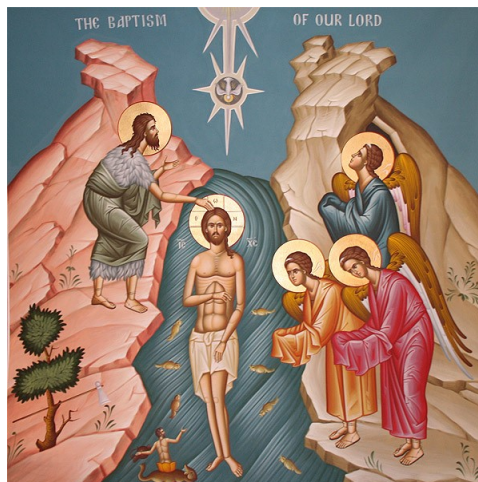
Upcoming Events

- Fri-Sat, Jan. 5-6th
Holy Theophany Services
- Sun, Jan. 14th. Parish Vasilopita Blessing and sales
- Jan. 17th, St. Anthony the Great, services in Springfield
- Jan. 25th, St. Gregory the Theologian
- Jan. 30th, Three Holy Hierarchs

Pray For servants of God

Constantina "Dina" H.
Julia, Presvytera
Jim and Donna
Georgia
Panagiota and Nick
Dennis and Peggy
Olga

*If you know someone especially in need of
community prayer, please inform
Fr. Achilles.*



*When You were
Baptized in the Jordon,
O Lord, the worship of
The Trinity was revealed,
For the voice of the Father
Bore witness unto You,
Calling You the Beloved Son,
And the Spirit
In the Form of a Dove,
Confirmed the Truth of His Word.
O Christ, Our God, who
Have appeared, and
Enlightened the world,
Glory to You!*

Holy Sacraments And Blessings

Memorials

- Sunday, January 7th,
40 Days, Ioana Teodora
Constantinescu

*May her memory be
eternal!*

Check the Web

www.ssconstantinehelen.org

www.goarch.org
Our Archdiocese website

www.chicago.goarch.org
Metropolis of Chicago website

www.orthodoxheritage.org
Lives of saints, edification, contemporary
issues

www.ancientfaithradio.com
24 hour Orthodox music, teaching, etc.

www.johnsanidopoulos.com
Mystagogy~ the intersection of contem-
porary culture and Holy Orthodoxy

Appropriate Dress in Church

There is an appropriate dress for all occasions, and in the Orthodox Church divine services are important occasions. Casual or revealing clothes are inappropriate. Short skirts, tight apparel and clothing with open backs are disturbing and non conducive to an atmosphere of worship and spiritual growth. Women traditionally wear skirts in the Orthodox Church, not pants.

Out of respect for our Lord and one another, let us refrain from dressing immodestly at all times, but especially in Church. Specifically, tight pants and shirts, shorts, sleeveless, and low cut dresses do not meet the norm of Christian modesty. Also, lipstick is inappropriate because it leaves residue on the holy icons and Communion spoon. Thank you for helping create an atmosphere that is conducive to mystically meeting Christ, our Eternal Bridegroom, at our Divine services.

Christmas 2017 and the months leading up to it may be known for anything but joyous Yule tidings! The usual calls for peace and good will and being nice and not naughty were punctuated wave after wave of allegations and accusations, usually regarding actions alleged in the past, even the very distant past. The ugliness has created a time in which the mere allegation of indiscretions and inappropriate actions result in punishments often without any trial or real evidence of wrongdoing. Pointing fingers and knee jerk reactions of people not even involved are the order of the day. It appears that evidence is no longer required, and timely reporting of those incidents that are worthy of investigation can't begin to happen. Anyone can blast anyone. And, anyone can become a target!

In all of this, one needs to ask, what of clear speech, of speaking the truth? What of putting the best construction on some of the things that happen? What of trust? What of "Let your yes, be yes, and your no, no?"

Of course, the whole matter is complicated when many of the accusations against certain behaviors are made by those who in other venues and circumstances essentially do the things that are being condemned!

There's lots of finger pointing, and very little self-examination. Lots of judgment, but really no forgiveness. Lots of calls for some sort of justice, which, under the microscope is not about justice, but about revenge. Amid such confusing times, it seems to me, we need look to Christ our God, the Lover of Mankind. What does He do?

He's not for pointing fingers: "Let him that has no sin, cast the first stone." As folks who are not in on some of the things, but only seeing and hearing of them, the best course is NOT to join in calls for judgment or arguments about how rotten those folks over there are. We, instead, are called to put the best

construction on those things around us. And, we are not the ones to sit in judgment, that's not our calling. And then, there's something called ... forgiveness.

After all, who really remembers what happened when someone brings up something not before known that happened decades ago? Was there truly some wrong action intended? Or was the accidental encounter unintended, however I might have been embarrassed at the time? How often in my life have I wanted to blame someone else when I was also part to the "crime" of the time?

Even more to the point, speak clearly and truthfully and simply. Recently, I was reading a father of the Church who said that confessions to the priest should be as simple as possible: "I did this" or "I did that" or "This happened," *with no lengthy dialog, because the more that we say, the more we may be covering up, or justifying that which is sin!* Remember the phrase, "Me thinks Thou dost protest too much?" And, be ready to forgive, to forget.

The past is past. It cannot be changed. And although we may learn from it, it must not rule our present. We all sin. We all can be forgiven in Christ. And in Him, even the worst enemies may be joined in His Love. No need for finger pointing, bringing up things long gone, for seeking revenge, for the more these things happen, the more darkness and confusion prevail.

Brothers and sisters, don't get caught up in all the noise and confusion! Don't be part of it by your speech. Remember that in Christ Jesus, the Light and Life of the World, all things finally find their meaning!

Christ is born! Glorify Him!
Ezekiel

St. Gregory the Theologian, Archbishop of Constantinople

St. Gregory the Theologian (Feast Day - January 25)

This great Father and Teacher of the Church was born in 329 in Arianzus, a village of the second district of Cappadocia, not far from Nazianzus. His father, who later became Bishop of Nazianzus, was named Gregory (commemorated Jan. 1), and his mother was named Nonna (Aug. 5); both are among the Saints, and so are his brother Caesarius (Mar. 9) and his sister Gorgona (Feb. 23). At first he studied in Caesarea of Palestine, then in Alexandria, and finally in Athens. As he was sailing from Alexandria to Athens, a violent sea storm put in peril not only his life but also his salvation, since he had not yet been baptized. With tears and fervour he besought God to spare him, vowing to dedicate his whole self to Him, and the tempest gave way to calm. At Athens Saint Gregory was later joined by Saint Basil the Great, whom he already knew; but now their acquaintanceship grew into a lifelong brotherly love. Another fellow student of theirs in Athens was the young Prince Julian, who later as Emperor was called the Apostate because he denied Christ and did all in his power to restore paganism. Even in Athens, before Julian had thrown off the mask of piety; Saint Gregory saw what an unsettled mind he had, and said, "What an evil the Roman State is nourishing" (Orat. V, 24, PG 35:693).

After their studies at Athens, Gregory became Basil's fellow ascetic, living the monastic life together with him for a time in the hermitages of Pontus. His father ordained him presbyter of the Church of Nazianzus, and Saint Basil consecrated him Bishop of Sasima (or Zansima), which was in the archdiocese of Caesarea. This consecration was a source of great sorrow to Gregory, and a cause of misunderstanding



between him and Basil; but his love for Basil remained unchanged, as can be plainly seen from his Funeral Oration on Saint Basil (Orat. XLIII). About the Year 379, Saint Gregory came to the assistance of the Church of Constantinople, which had already been troubled for forty years by the Arians; by his supremely wise words and many labours he freed it from the corruption of heresy, and was elected Archbishop of that city by the Second Ecumenical Council, which assembled there in 381, and condemned Macedonius, Archbishop of Constantinople, the enemy of the Holy Spirit. When Saint Gregory came to Constantinople, the Arians had taken all the churches and he was forced to serve in a house chapel dedicated to Saint Anastasia the Martyr. From there he began to preach his famous five sermons on the Trinity, called the Triadica.

When he left Constantinople two years later, the Arians did not have one church left to them in the city. Saint Meletius of Antioch (see Feb. 12), who was presiding over the Second Ecumenical Council, died in the course of it, and Saint Gregory was chosen in his stead; there he distinguished himself in his expositions of dogmatic theology.

Having governed the Church until 382, he delivered his farewell speech - the Syntacterion, in which he demonstrated the Divinity of the Son - before 150 bishops and the Emperor Theodosius the Great; in this speech he requested, and received from all, permission to retire from the see of Constantinople. He returned to Nazianzus, where he lived to the end of his life, and reposed in the Lord in 391, having lived some sixty-two years.

His extant writings, both prose and poems in every type of metre, demonstrate his lofty eloquence and his wondrous breadth of learning. In the beauty of his writings, he is considered to have surpassed the Greek writers of antiquity, and because of his God-inspired theological thought, he received the surname "Theologian." Although he is sometimes called Gregory of Nazianzus, this title belongs properly to his father; he himself is known by the Church only as Gregory the Theologian. He is especially called "Trinitarian Theologian," since in virtually every homily he refers to the Trinity and the one essence and nature of the Godhead. Hence, Alexius Anthorus dedicated the following verses to him:

*Like an unwandering star beaming with splendour,
Thou bringest us by mystic teachings, O Father,
To the Trinity's sunlike illumination,
O mouth breathing with fire,
Gregory most mighty.*

Apolytikion in the First Tone

The shepherd's pipe of thy theology conquered the trumpets of the philosophers; for since thou didst search out the depths of the Spirit, beauty of speech was added to thee. But intercede with Christ God, O Father Gregory, that our souls be saved.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
December 31st 6 pm Great Vespers	1 6 pm Great Vespers	2 6 pm Vespers	3 Fast Free 6 pm Vespers	4 6 pm Vespers	5 Strict Fast 6pm Vespers Divine Liturgy of Theophany Blessing of the Waters	6 Holy Theophany 9 am Matins and Divine Liturgy; Great Blessing of the Waters; followed by 1:15pm Blessing at Wilmore Park, Lake 1 5pm Great Vespers
7 St. John the Baptist 8:45 Matins 10 am Divine Liturgy 40 Day Memorial, Ioana T. Constantinescu	8 6 pm Vespers	9 6 pm Vespers	10 St. Gregory of Nyssa 6 pm Vespers	11 6 pm Vespers	12 6 pm Vespers	13 5 pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
14 Sunday after Theophany 8:45 Matins 10 am Divine Liturgy Vasilopita Blessing	15 6 pm Great Vespers	16 6 pm Great Vespers	 17 St. Anthony The Great 9:30 am Divine Liturgy, St. Anthony GOC, Springfield, IL	18 Sts. Athanasios And Cyril of Alexandria 6 pm Vespers	19 6 pm Vespers	20 5 pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
21 15th Sun. of Luke 8:45 Matins 10 am Divine Liturgy Parish Council FOCUS Meal	22 6 pm Great Vespers	23 6 pm Great Vespers	24 6 pm Great Vespers	25 St. Gregory the Theologian 9 am Matins and Divine Liturgy	26 6 pm Vespers	27 5 pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
28 Sun. of the Publican and Pharisee 8:45 Matins 10 am Divine Liturgy Philoptochos Meets	29 6 pm Great Vespers	30 Holy Three Hierarchs 9 am Matins and Divine Liturgy	31 Fast Free Week		Shaded days are Fasting days.	

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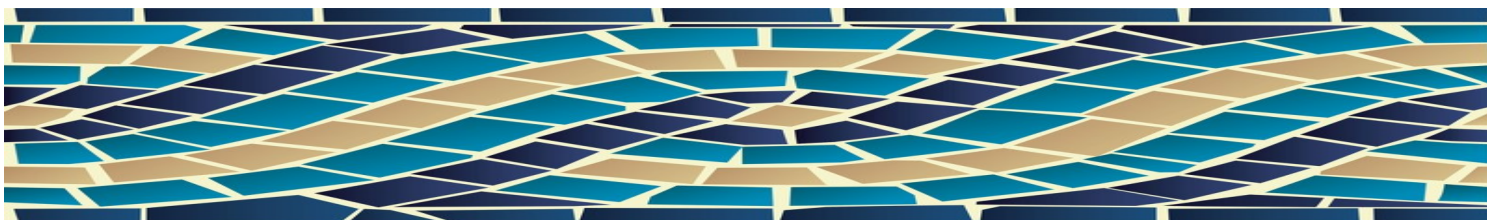
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**Return
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Theophany Holy Water Blessings

Beloved in Christ,

As you know, it is part of our Orthodox heritage and a great blessing to welcome the priest into your home after the Great Blessing of the Water on Holy Theophany, in order to pray and bless the home and its inhabitants with the Holy Water.

Did you miss this Blessing last year? How unfortunate! Did you receive it? How excellent! Now it is time to renew the blessing and sanctification that has taken place. Do we only receive Holy Communion once in a long while? Of course not; we receive as often as we are able in order to be renewed by partaking of and in the Life of Christ.

Our Salvation is the process of being made holy, of being raised from earth to Heaven. It is for this our Lord came! The House Blessing schedule will soon be released—please anticipate scheduling a Holy Water Blessing for your household between the dates of January 7 and Feb. 11th.

Fr. Achilles

Jordan River, tell us do: * What did you see and were amazed? * I saw naked Him whom none * can see, and shuddered in fear. * And how was I not to shudder at Him and be frightened? * The Angels, when they saw Him also shuddered in awe. * And heaven was astonished, and astounded was earth. * The sea recoiled along with all things * both visible and invisible. * For Christ appeared in the River Jordan, * to sanctify the waters. (Kathisma of Epiphany Matins)