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“[You] will see Jesus submitting to be baptized in the River Jordan for my (and our) purification ... sanctifying the waters by His Purification (though He had no need of purification Who takes away the sin of the world) and the heavens cleft asunder, and witness borne to him by the Spirit Who is of one nature with Him ...”

—St. Gregory the Theologian, in his sermon “On the Theophany...”

Our Church Has a New Phone Number

Some of us have already noticed a shiny new answering machine in the Church hall. This is the fruit of efforts on the part of our parish council to save our Church unnecessary expenditure, by switching our Church phone line from AT&T to Comcast.

Unfortunately, AT&T would not allow us to use our old phone number. So, our new Church phone number is 288-2150 (in the 209 area code, of course). However, if you have an emergency, please call my number (Father Andrew): 352-6791.

House Blessings—an Important Tradition

House blessings are joyous occasions, also an essential part of Orthodox life in the Church, and are sacramental—imparting to our homes “a fresh start” as we begin the new calendar year. A sign-up sheet to schedule your house blessing will be available in the Parish Hall. If you haven’t decided on a day and time while at Church, just call or e-mail Fr. Andrew with your request. The best time for house blessings are in the week following Theophany, and generally in the month of January. I will be glad to answer any questions.

The Great Feast of the Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Holy Theophany

Brothers and sisters, on the Eve of Theophany (Tuesday, January 5) at 6:00 p.m., we will have Great Vespers with Litya and the Blessing of Water—replenishing our supply of holy water for all members of the Church. (Bring your jars and jugs to Church to take some Holy Water home with you.) Then, on the day of Theophany (Wednesday, January 6) at 6:00 a.m., we will celebrate Divine Liturgy.

Regarding this feast, let us note that, while the Liturgical New Year of the Church begins with the Indiction on September 1, the new year of the secular calendar has just begun. Nevertheless, the wisdom of the Church has provided us with a spiritual focus for this (otherwise secular) new beginning: the Baptism in the Jordan of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A question arises, which St. John Chrysostom once asked, only to immediately give the answer as well: “Why ... is this day called Theophany? Because Christ made Himself known to all—not when He was *born*, but when He was *baptized*,” in his fourth-century “Discourse on the Day of the Baptism of Christ.” So it is that the word “Theophany” means “God showing (or

*Corner of Jamestown Rd.
& Robinwood Ln.
(2 blocks north of
Racetrack Rd.)

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revealed);” it is also (in the West) called “Epiphany,” meaning “made manifest (or a manifestation).”

And, not only was He revealed as the Son of God (the Messiah Whom humanity had awaited for ages and ages), we can *now* see (hindsight being “20/20”) that our Lord’s baptism revealed not only Himself as Who He is, but because the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove and the Father’s voice proclaimed “This is my beloved Son...” (Matthew 3:13-17), the reality of the very *Godhead*, the *Holy Trinity*—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—was revealed.

II. Sanctification of All Creation

Nor was Theophany simply a baptism of Our Lord personally, but by His presence in the running waters of the Jordan, His grace infused the water, and the water flowed out, moistening the earth, and mingling with other bodies of water, and being evaporated into the clouds, becoming rain ... *baptizing all of Creation*, to prepare Creation for Christ’s long-awaited ministry—the ministry of the Messiah Himself.

Indeed, as Christ was baptized in the sacrament by which we are all sanctified, it should be known—as is spoken and reiterated by the Fathers in the long Tradition of our Church—that Christ in His holiness sanctified the waters in His baptism. He lifted up His Creation to that exalted status to which Creation rightfully belongs, and by doing so, has shown all of us our rightful roles—as members of the holy priesthood of all believers, created specifically by God to lift up all of Creation to Him.

So it is that we are called to bless those things that are given into our hands, and in doing so, we enact a central part of the Christian purpose.

Hours Readings

January 3	Rdr Tikhon
January 10	Alexandra Campbell
January 17	Rdr Tikhon
January 24	Alexandra Campbell
January 31	Rdr Tikhon

Anyone who would like to read the Hours before liturgy, please contact Subdeacon Nicolas Teshin at 209-536-1625 to be added to the list or for more information.

MANY YEARS

Birthdays:

Sara Arsheid	January 11
Julian Arsheid	January 14
Asa Campbell	January 19
Dave Harmer	January 14
Layne Williams	January 24

Anniversaries:

Alex & Natalie Teshin	January 26
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III. His Baptism a Blessing—and a Lesson

In His baptism, Christ, Our King and Our God modeled the humility that He asks of us, when He deigned to be baptized by John the Forerunner. By His example, then, if we know something is the right thing to do, we should do it. Yet, often enough, we get a dose of the “Yeah, but...” disease, in which we are perpetually trapped in the small space between what we actually want to do, or what would be good for us to do—and all the reasons why we think we can’t.

Christ was not bound by excuses, and He knew us well enough to recognize our “yeah, but-isms.” He very kindly showed us the way out of that spiritual imprisonment. Just as the waters of baptism have washed us spiritually clean, so, too, each and every one of our actions in faith is a baptism-like testament to what we believe. This is both good, and a problem, because we are spiritually faced with going “into the waters” many times every day, when events arise that require moral, “right or wrong” decisions.

All the way from whether to give alms to a beggar right outside our door, or what would be an appropriate present to give a niece or a nephew for an eighth birthday, Our Lord’s example of submission discerns for us the proper attitude toward our spiritual life. Another example: if going to Liturgy when we are feeling down makes us feel better, would the proper decision be to stay home instead? Likewise, the simple submission to that which is healthy for our soul fills us with the life-giving fullness of our faith.

IV. Holy Water

Many of the Fathers of the Church testify that Christ’s holiness, sanctifying the waters of the Jordan in which He was baptized, is a mirror image of our own baptisms: the waters sanctified by Him, sanctify

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us. This is the basis of holy water. We call upon God to bless the water, that the Holy Spirit might imbue the water with His power and grace, sanctifying the water such that it might be a blessing to all who partake, and to all that we bless with it.

V. A Short History of the Feast

Father Thomas Hopko's "Rainbow Catechism" states that Theophany, as celebrated in early Christianity, "... included the celebration of Christ's birth, the adoration of the Wise Men, and all of the childhood events of Christ such as his circumcision and presentation to the temple—as well as His baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast ... was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights."

But the Church began to see changes in this single feast, and, in the late fourth century, St. John Chrysostom declared that a different way of referring to the various aspects of the feast was gaining prominence; there was a new emphasis on using "Nativity" to refer to the Incarnation itself, and "Theophany" to refer to the Baptism itself, eventually becoming the practice of celebrating the Nativity and the Theophany separately, as we do currently.

So it is that on January 5, we will celebrate the Theophany by baptizing *water itself* in the Blessing of the Waters at the end of Great Vespers; and even greater, we will immerse our souls in the great blessing of Christ's Eucharist on January 6. For, not only did Christ show us the goodness of the action, and the truth of its efficaciousness; He also made water a prime vehicle for blessing us *and everything*, as we have seen.

May we all bless the new year by the waters of Theophany!

In Christ,
Fr. Andrew

St. Susanna Cleaning Team Schedule

*Blessed are those who love the beauty
of God's house*

Team 1—Week of January 3rd

Team 2—Week of January 17th

Prayer List

PLEASE JOIN US IN GIVING THANKS TO GOD:

- For the skill and devotion of those beautifying our temple and gardens.
- For the beauty of the Mother Lode, and for the privilege we have been given to live here.
- That the Holy Mother of Jesus continues to care for the unborn.
- That many of our petitions are being answered.
- For Peter's return back home safely.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR GOD'S HELP:

- For seasonal rain.
- "St. John, please intercede for us before God for the membership growth of St. Susanna."
- For repose of the souls of our service men and women who have given their lives for people of foreign lands.
- To safeguard all the troops who remain in heathen lands.
- To help us forgive heathen fanatics.
- That many may come to Orthodoxy through our witness and example.
- To bless our monasteries and the men and women who dwell in them.
- For the building of a monastery in Sonora.
- For the health of Fr. Ignatius.
- For health and strength for Anna.
- For health and spiritual strength for Alex.
- For Ellen, that she be cured of cancer and have strength during her treatments.
- For health and strength for Anastasia.
- For healing of Presbyteria Chrisy.
- For health and healing for Rob.
- For health and healing for Keri.
- For health and healing for Natasha.
- For health and healing for Fred.
- For health and healing for Nina.
- For health and healing for Judy.
- For Ramey for healing from an undiagnosed disease.
- For health of Metropolitan Hilarion.
- For health for Rebecca and her unborn child.
- For health and healing for Andres.
- For health and healing for Violet
- For health and healing for Ruth.

(To ask us to pray for you, your family, or friends, please email Alex Teshin at alex@teshin.com or call 209-536-9999.)

January 2016						
◀ December						February ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 The Circumcision of Our Lord (No service today)	2 6:00 pm Great Vespers for The Sunday Before Theophany
3 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for The Sunday Before Theophany (2 Timothy 4:5-8 and Mark 1:1-8); Sunday School for Younger Children; Potluck Luncheon; Parish Council Meeting	4	5 6:00 pm Great Vespers w/ Litya and the Blessing of Water for The Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Sign up For House Blessings!	6 6:00 am Divine Liturgy for The Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 and Matthew 3:13-17) Sign up For House Blessings!	7	8	9 6:00 pm Great Vespers for The Sunday After Theophany
10 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for The Sunday After Theophany (Ephesians 4:7-13 and Matthew 4:12-17)	11	12 6:00 pm Catechism Class Sign up For House Blessings!	13	14	15	16 6:00 pm Great Vespers for Godbearing Father Anthony the Great
17 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for Godbearing Father Anthony the Great (Colossians 1:12-18; Hebrews 13:17-21 and Luke 18:18-27; 6:17-23)	18	19 6:00 pm Catechism Class Sign up For House Blessings!	20	21	22	23 6:00 pm Great Vespers
24 9:00 am Divine Liturgy (Colossians 3:4-11 and Luke 18:35-43)	25	26 6:00 pm Catechism Class Sign up For House Blessings!	27	28	29	30 6:00 pm Great Vespers
31 9:00 am Divine Liturgy (Colossians 3:12-16 and Matthew 25:14-30)	Notes: Sunday School for Younger Children is held on the first Sunday of each month, after Holy Communion. Catechism class takes place at 6:00pm Tuesdays. All are invited—this is not just for beginners! Theophany House Blessings are an honored tradition and take place on and shortly after Theophany: contact Father Andrew to arrange the blessing of your household.					