



# Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

## Sun, January 10, 2021 - Sunday After Theophany



31ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 6.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (4th c.). St. Dometian, Bishop of Melitene (601).



### Hymns for Today

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body. Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it. Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, glory to Thee.

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, and called Thee His beloved Son; and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God, Who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee.

In truth thou wast revealed to thy flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; thy humility exalted thee; and thy poverty enriched thee. O Hierarch Father Gregory, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

When Christ God, the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He

bestowed resurrection on the human race. He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

Thou didst keep watch with the eyes of thy soul, O holy bishop, revealing thyself as a watchful pastor for the world. With the staff of thy wisdom and thy fervent intercession, thou didst drive away all heretics like wolves, and didst preserve thy flock free from harm, O most wise Gregory.

Today Thou hast shone forth to the world, O Lord, and the light of Thy countenance has been marked on us. Knowing Thee, we sing Thy praises: “Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O unapproachable Light.”

### Epistle Reading - Ephesians 4:7-13

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” (Now this, “He ascended” – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

### Gospel Reading - Matthew 4:12-17

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of

**DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS:** *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from Holy Trinity Orthodox Church. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting.*

the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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## THIS WEEK'S SERVICE SCHEDULE

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**SAT, Jan 9:** 5 PM Great Vespers

**SUN, Jan 10:** 8:40 AM Hours, 9 AM Divine Liturgy,  
Parish Council Meeting

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**SAT, Jan 16:** 5 PM Great Vespers

**SUN, Jan 17:** 8:40 AM Hours, 9 AM Divine Liturgy,  
Parastas

**Sun, Jan 17: Parastas**

**In Memory of Stephen Krill**

*Offered by Mr. & Mrs. Robert Stella*

**In Memory of Anna Lahr**

*Offered by Irene Dutko*

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## 2021 "OUTDOOR" HOME BLESSINGS CONTINUE

Outdoor Home Blessings will continue this week. If you are not yet on the schedule or were missed last week contact Fr. Innocent to arrange a day and time.

### Home Blessing Schedule

**Tues, Jan 12th:** Wilkes Barre City & Township, Kingston & Westside, and homes missed earlier (11 AM - 5 PM)

**By Appointment:** Back Mountain, Outside of Area

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## **BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES - MANY YEARS!**

**January Birthdays:** Coleen King (1/1), Mary Krill (1/1), Greg Polk (1/4), Melissa Donlick (1/5), Margaret Krout (1/7), Jerry Stankiewicz (1/8), David Welgus (1/11), Bernard Bolubiewski (1/20), Josie Bisset (1/31), Amanda Benczkowski, Matthias Haugh

**This Week's Birthdays:** David Welgus (1/11)

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## Altar Server Schedule

**Sunday, Jan 10:** Alec B, Kaleb D, Symeon C

**Sunday, Jan 17:** Vladimir H, Alex H, Ephraim N

**Sunday, Jan 24:** Alec B, Tommy D, Andrew N

**Sunday, Jan 31:** Vladimir H, Christopher D, Andrew C

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**PARISH PRAYER LIST Living:** Cynthia Dulsky, Theodore & Elenor Sovryda, Nadine Breisch, Rosalie Bagenski, Sonja & Leanne Kay, Brian Cawley, Josie Bissett, Lisa & Scott Harvey, Daniel & Shannon Bissett, Rebecca King, Delores Karas, Antonette Terry, Archpriest Daniel & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Mat Delores Donlick & Fr. Daniel Donlick, Violet Filipi, Catherine, Danny Gobish, Lorraine Pace, Camden Thomas, Peter Holoviak & Family, Mary Krill, Marni Bachman & Family, Rose Marie, Elaine Benczkowski, Helen Gudaitis, Mahaffey Family, George Scott, Evelyn Kosmiski, Joe Sloan, Dustin & Nina, Priest Gregory & Mat Catherine White

**Newly Departed:** Archbishop David, Archpriest Eugene Pianovich, Mitty Woytowich, Beatrice Peck

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## Remembering Our Baptism: Uniting With Christ

*Father Anthony M. Coniaris*

What is baptism? The late Fr. Lazarus Moore of blessed memory wrote a booklet entitled *Baptism as Thirty Celebrations* wherein he enumerates thirty blessings that God bestows on us in the celebration of holy baptism. It is evident that God's love holds nothing back. He showers His blessings upon us in infant baptism even before we can know Him in what is pure grace. Let us examine briefly a few of those thirty baptismal blessings.

### **Exodus**

Baptism is our passage through the Red Sea of sin. Augustine wrote, "Your sins are your enemies. They will follow you, but only up to the Red Sea. When you have entered (the Red Sea through baptism), you will escape: they (your sins) will be destroyed, just as the Egyptians were engulfed by the waters while the Israelites escaped on dry land." Thus baptism is an act of liberation, a paschal experience, an exodus, a passage through the Red Sea of sin and death to the glorious freedom of the children of God. It is the transition from the world that is under the power of the evil one to the world that has been redeemed by Christ.

### **A Drowning**

Baptism is our trip to the Jordan River. In this water we are crucified with Christ; nevertheless we live, sharing His living water. The old sinful nature is drowned in these waters and we rise, as from a grave, to share in the new life of Christ. Baptism is indeed a tomb and a womb. The waters of baptism are our waters of Siloam and our pool of Bethesda. The Spirit breathes upon this water and we enter to be bathed with thirty blessings of God's abundant grace.

### **An Adoption Into God's Family**

Through baptism God adopts us as His own sons and daughters. He makes us heirs of all His riches. He makes us members of His family. As members of God's family we are all related to each other and responsible for each other. Yet baptism is more than all of this. Through baptism we are attached to Christ. We become members of His body. Each baptized Christian becomes an extension of Christ. We become other Christs in the world. We become His eyes, His hands, His tongue, His feet. Christ has chosen to work in the world through us – the members of His body. It is our special responsibility as baptized Christians to let Christ be present wherever we ourselves are stationed in the world as baptized Christians. Christ has made Himself dependent on us to do His work in the world today. To quote St. Chrysostom, “Christ is the head of the Church, but what can the head do without hands, without feet, without eyes, without ears, without tongue?” In baptism the members of our body are anointed with the sign of the cross to signify that they are now dedicated to serve Him since they are members of His Body. Baptism is the sacrament of belonging.

### **God Claims Us**

Baptism is God laying claim to you. St. Paul says, “You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.” God doesn't rent you. He buys you. He holds title to you. He owns you. Through baptism you become His child. And when God adopts you as His child, He does so for a purpose. He has a plan for you. You're saved from sin. You're saved for service, for love, for good works, for enlarging the kingdom. You're saved into significance. You're saved for theosis. Your life has real worth and meaning. “I know My sheep,” said Jesus. “And nobody can pluck them out of my hand.” Following baptism you are God's property. You have the authority to say to the devil, “Take your hands off me. I don't

belong to you. I belong to God. I am His property. You have no claim over me. I renounce you!”

### **A New Birth**

Baptism is the sacrament of new birth. It is the creation of the new person in Christ. It is to be born anew of water and the Spirit. I had nothing to do with my physical birth. Birth for me was a great gift of God which He wrought through my parents. This first birth was a birth of the flesh. My second birth, the “born-again” birth, was also something with which I had nothing to do. It also was a gift of God wrought for me by God's grace at the baptismal font. After baptism man is a living member of the Body of Christ. He is no longer mere man, but man transformed, divinized, newly transfigured, begotten as God's own son or daughter. He carries within him the very life of God.

### **A Mantle Of Salvation**

Baptism in the Orthodox Church is far more than the remission of sins. The dominant theme of baptism is positive. As St. Nicholas Cabasilas, a 14th century Byzantine theologian points out all the scriptural and traditional terms applied to baptism point to a positive meaning: “birth”, “new birth”, “clothing”, “anointing”, “gifts”. “washing”, “enlightening”, “refashioning”, “seal”, etc. Theodore of Cyrus (393–466 A.D.) confirms this when he writes: *If the only meaning of baptism were remission of sins, why would we baptize newborn children who have not yet tasted of sin? But the mystery of baptism is not limited to this; it is a promise of greater and more perfect gifts. In it are the promises of future delights; it is the type of the future resurrection, a communion with the Master's passion, a participation in His resurrection, a mantle of salvation, a tunic of gladness, a garment of light, or rather it is light itself.*

### **Clothed With Christ**

St. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, “The Holy Spirit divinizes (deifies) the person who is baptized.” Baptism, according to Orthodox theology, does more than set us free from the bondage of original sin, it clothes us with Christ and makes us partakers of His divine nature. Hence the singing during the baptismal service of the verse from the letter of Paul to the Galatians, “As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ.” At a certain point in the baptismal service, the celebrant priest says to the newly baptized, “You are baptized. You are illumined. You are anointed with the Holy Chrism. You are sanctified. You are washed in the

name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” We may add to these words the expression of St. Gregory of Sinai: “Become what you already are,” i.e., claim the gift of theosis that God has given you in holy baptism and develop it as you go through life. Grow in the life of Christ which you have received in baptism that you may become a true son or daughter of the heavenly Father.

### **Betrothed To Christ**

Through baptism we are betrothed to Jesus. He becomes our Bridegroom. We enter into a marriage relationship with Him that requires love and faithfulness.

### **The Robe Of Glory Regained**

Through baptism we “put on Christ.” This has tremendous implications. If we have put on Christ, then we have put on His love, His forgiveness, His peace, His joy. If we have put on Christ, we have put on His servanthood: “If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, then you also ought to wash one another's feet.” If we have put on Christ, then we shall suffer as Christ suffered; we shall be persecuted for the truth as Christ was persecuted. If we have put on Christ, we shall be resurrected as Jesus was. We shall be glorified as Christ was glorified; we shall ascend to the Father as He ascended to the Father. We shall sit at the right hand of the Father with Jesus. We shall partake of His divine nature and share in His life and glory, becoming “gods by grace” as He is God by nature and essence. Some early Church Fathers see this as the recovery of the “robe of glory”, lost by Adam at the fall.

### **A Personal Response**

Baptism demands a personal response on the part of the baptized child when it grows up. The child must accept what God did for him or her in baptism. For baptism is not a divine pass that will get us into heaven automatically. Dr. Nikos Nissiotis, a well known Orthodox theologian, once said, “A baptized Christian – especially in the Churches in which infant baptism is practiced – needs to make a personal decision regarding the Christian faith which he has passively inherited from his Christian environment.” Any relationship has to be developed by two parties. The baptized infant has not yet developed a relationship with God. But one party in the relationship has already taken the initiative: God loves us from the first moment of our conception. He takes the initiative to establish the relationship. Infant baptism is an expression of God's wooing love from the first moment of life. As the child becomes aware of faith in

Jesus Christ, he looks back and realizes that something or someone led him to this act of faith. Eventually, he realizes that it all began back there in baptism when God came to him. At that moment he must make a personal response to God, committing his life to Him.

### **Mere Belonging To The Church Is Not Enough**

One does not become a Christian automatically. Fr Schmemmann, a respected Orthodox theologian, said, “It is not mere belonging to the Church that saves, for there is no magic in Christianity, but the acceptance of the Spirit of Christ.” St. Peter said, “Repent, and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). To become truly a Christian, one must agree freely to be converted, to repent, to turn to Christ, and accept His Holy Spirit. In baptism there is something that is done by God and something that is done by man. Man responds to God's initiative. He accepts the gift and turns with faith to follow Christ as Lord.

### **A Process Of Unending Growth**

The new life, initiated by baptism and sustained by the Eucharist, becomes the way to follow as one walks through this world. This means that salvation is not instant. It begins on the day of our baptism and chrismation when we renounce the devil, receive Christ, and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. From that moment we begin a process of slow spiritual growth. The sacraments of the Church provide us with the grace we need to become gods by grace, deified, “partakers of divine nature” as St. Peter says. Our salvation (deification) begins at baptism and continues throughout life. It is a process of unending spiritual growth. “Keep working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation,” writes St. Paul (Phil. 2:12).

Simon Tugwell, a patristic scholar, expressed it succinctly when he wrote, There can be no brisk “On with the new man, off with the old!” A long process of growth is required to bring us to perfection. Baptism gives us an “image of perfection” but this has to mature slowly, just as a baby is, in one sense, fully formed, but still has to grow. The immediate result of baptism is that there are now two “personae at work in us. Sin and grace coexist in us. The important thing is that we should side with grace. **Read more of this article at** [goarch.org/-/remembering-our-baptism-uniting-with-christ](http://goarch.org/-/remembering-our-baptism-uniting-with-christ)