



The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

+ The Sunday after the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ + December 31st, 2023 + Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord.



Hymns for Today

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshipped the stars, were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph, to David, the ancestor of God; thou hast seen a Virgin great with child; and thou didst give glory with the shepherds; thou didst worship with the Magi, and didst receive the news from the Angel. Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Today godly David is filled with joy; Joseph and James offer praise. The glorious crown of their kinship with Christ fills them with great joy. They sing praises to the

One ineffably born on earth, and they cry out: "O Compassionate One, save those who honor Thee!"

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels with shepherds glorify Him! The Wise Men journey with the star, since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child!

Please Sing Along!

Singing the hymns and responses to the litanies along with the choir throughout the Divine Liturgy is encouraged!

Epistle Reading - Galatians 1:11-19

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. 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. If you have questions please let us know!

Gospel Reading - Matthew 2:13-23

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."



This Week's Schedule Doly TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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THIS WEEKEND

Saturday, December 30th

5 PM: 9th Hour (4:50), Great Vespers, Confession

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Sunday, December 31st

8:10 AM: Resurrectional Matins w/ Hours

9 AM: Divine Liturgy, Parish Potluck, No Church School

11:15 AM: Vespers for the Feast of the Circumcision

The Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord /

St. Basil the Great

(Vespers Sunday after Divine Liturgy @ 11:15 AM)

Monday, January 1st

9 AM: Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

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THIS WEEK

WED 11 AM - 1:30 PM: Private Prayer in Church

6:30 PM: Akathist: "Glory to God for All Things"

THURS 11 AM: Bible Study

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The Great Feast of the Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Friday, January 5th

6:30 PM: Compline & Matins for Theophany

Saturday, January 6th

9 AM: Divine Liturgy for the Feast w/ Blessing of Water

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NEXT WEEKEND

Saturday, January 6th

5 PM: 9th Hour (4:50), Great Vespers, Confession

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Sunday, January 7th

8:10 AM: Resurrectional Matins w/ Hours

9 AM: Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Church School



ANNOUNCEMENTS

& Upcoming Parish Events

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Parish Council is the second Sunday of each month. Our next meeting is SUN, Jan 14th.

Friends of the Poor is the second Saturday of each month. The next gathering will be SAT, Jan 13th.

Parish Potlucks are usually the last Sunday of each month. Our next potluck is TODAY, December 31st.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE MEETING - Fundraising committee meeting Sunday, January 21st following Divine Liturgy at Coffee Hour. Anyone interested in being part of the committee is welcome to attend.

TAKE POINSETTIAS HOME: If you made a donation towards the Christmas Poinsettias in remembrance of your loved ones (living or departed), please feel free to take one home.

Annual parish council meeting/ Nominations for Office – Sunday, January 28th, 2024 following Divine Liturgy, all members are asked to attend our annual parish meeting. **Election for church council officers will be conducted. Open positions include Treasurer and Trustee.** Qualification for election into office per HTOC bylaws requires that one be at least 21 years of age; a voting member of the parish for at least one year for trustees and 2 years two years for officers; an active communicant of the sacraments (confession / communion); meet all canonical requirements of the faith; and a person of the church in conduct and speech. If you would like to serve on the Parish Council please contact one of the members of this year's nominating committee – Andy Kondratick, Donna Stankeiwicz, Dan Brisk, or Fr. Innocent.

GIVING ENVELOPES: The 2024 Giving Envelopes will be available in the back of the church NEXT Sunday Jan. 7th. If you would like envelopes and there is not a box in the back for you, OR if you received envelopes and would no longer like to receive them, please see Greg Polk or Deborah Mills.

2024 Parish Calendars are here!

A very special thank you to David, Michael and Patricia Yeosock and the Yeosock Funeral Home for sponsoring this year's beautiful calendar published by St. Tikhon's Monastery. Pick up your calendar at the candle stand. One calendar per family please.

2024 HOME BLESSINGS

PLEASE READ FOR INSTRUCTIONS

The Blessing of Homes will begin **Tuesday, January 9th**. The order in which homes are blessed will follow the normal pattern. Please see the schedule below. You can prepare for our visit by having an icon, candle, bowl for holy water, and list for living & departed. **If you do not want your home blessed please indicate so on the sign up sheet in the vestibule.** If you have not had your home

blessed in past years, but would like to this year, let Fr. Innocent know so he can add you to the schedule. Fr. Innocent and the boys look forward to this joyful time with each one of you!

Home Blessing Schedule

Tues, Jan 9th: Miners Mill & Parsons (11:00 PM – 3 PM)

Wed, Jan 10th: Hudson, Plains, Laflin, Pittston, Bald Mountain (11 AM – 5 PM)

Thurs, Jan 11th: Mountaintop, Hanover Twp, Nanticoke Area (11 AM – 5 PM)

Tues, Jan 16th: Wilkes Barre City & Township, Kingston & Westside, and homes missed earlier (11 AM – 5 PM)

By Appointment: Back Mountain, Outside of Area

Birthdays & Anniversaries

January Birthdays: Coleen King (1/1), Mary Krill (1/1), Greg Polk (1/4), Melissa Donlick (1/5), Sonja Kay (1/6), Margaret Krout (1/7), Jerry Stankiewicz (1/8), David Welgus (1/11), Amanda Benczkowski (1/17), Matthias Haugh (1/22), Josie Bisset (1/31), Amanda Benczkowski, Matthias Haugh **Anniversaries:** N/A

This Week's Birthdays: Coleen King (1/1), Mary Krill (1/1), Greg Polk (1/4), Melissa Donlick (1/5), Sonja Kay (1/6)

THIS SATURDAY, Jan 6th

Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

PARISH PRAYER LIST Living: Cynthia Dulsky, Nadine Breisch, Holoviak Family, Evelyn Kosmiski, Mat. Elizabeth, Jeri Basarab, Fr. Theodore Orzolek, Vladimir & Marie Dutko, Tom & Joan Austin, David, Elizabeth, Lydia, Melanie Bishop, Delores Voda, Nicole Hapeman, David Goobic, David Lezinsky, Mat Melanie **Departed:** Rosalie, Mary Ann Lepa, Stanley Cramton, Ioan, Irene

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

There is a third-century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but “to bury human sin by water,” to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify “the nature of water” and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.



The Treasury

“... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. + Jesus Christ

Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$12,305

Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$2,840

Collections last Sunday (12/24): \$2,253

Feast of the Nativity (12/25): \$1,732

PROPORTIONAL GIVING

Assessing our personal giving for the coming new year.
Proportional giving is the practice of returning to the Lord a portion of the financial treasure He has blessed us with in this life. We offer our gifts in gratitude for His. This principle is found in both the Old and New Testament scriptures. Because it is proportional, what is returned to Him is different for each family and household. The giving chart below offers a starting point for giving based on a range of weekly incomes along with a range of giving levels beginning at 10%, the ideal for a Christian tithe if one is capable, down to 2%. Our goal as we journey through life is to offer increasingly more of what God has given us back to Him, just as we give more of our heart. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* (Matt 6:21). This, of course, is done freely and out of love for God and His Church, not in response to an outward rule (*Freely you have received, freely give* – Matt 10:8). May this chart be helpful for you in prayerfully determining your level of giving this coming new year, challenging yourself to return to God the good portion of His financial blessings.

Weekly Income	10%	5%	4%	2%
\$200	\$20	\$10	\$8	\$4
\$500	\$50	\$25	\$20	\$10
\$750	\$75	\$37	\$30	\$15
\$1000	\$100	\$50	\$40	\$20
\$1500	\$150	\$75	\$60	\$30
\$2000	\$200	\$100	\$80	\$40