

**:: On the Occasional of the Feasts of the Twelve Days of Christmas ::**  
**By Protopresbyter Fr. Thomas Bambinis**

The festive Twelve Days which begin with the feast of Christmas (Dec. 25) and ends with Theophany, or the Feast of Lights (Jan. 6), shows us the greatness of the Christian Faith and indeed of Orthodoxy. These feasts are really celebrated only when they are associated with the life of the Church, because outside of the Church no one can understand their true meaning. They remain on the surface, with fickle emotions, and they ignore the salvific depth from which derives the existence and life of the Church of Christ.

**The Incarnation of God - Christmas, the Capital of Feasts** - is a "strange mystery" that gives us the opportunity to become members of the Body of Christ. The Church exists as the Body of Christ, since the Son of God became man.

**The circumcision Christ accepted in obedience to the law** [*commemorated January 1*] expresses the ascetic struggle necessary that we may be freed from the "veil of our passions." Christ endured circumcision in the flesh, so that we can attain the circumcision of our hearts, which is our purification.

Finally, **the Baptism of Christ** brought sanctification to the waters and remade it as a "soul purifier." Thus, with the baptism of the Church, during which the waters of the font are sanctified and acquire the "blessing of Jordan," the "innocent" child or the adult catechized in Orthodoxy, that is, the one who is guided and struggling to reach the "circumcision of the heart," is renewed and illumined. This takes place because, according to the Apostle Paul, with our baptism "in Christ" we are "clothed in Christ," buried with Him, and rise with Him. We are members of His Body, members of His Church.

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*Any announcements for the Sunday bulletin? Please submit by Wednesday each week to Fr. Andrew, by email or phone.*



## St. George Orthodox Church of Spring Valley

211 E. Minnesota St., Spring Valley, IL 61362  
Church Office: (815) 664-4540  
[www.stgeorgeorthodox.org](http://www.stgeorgeorthodox.org)

Pastor: Father Andrew Kishler  
[frandrew@stgeorgeorthodox.org](mailto:frandrew@stgeorgeorthodox.org)  
(773) 575-3272 (cell)

### December 29, 2013 – Sunday after the Nativity of Christ

St. Joseph the Betrothed and David the King  
The Holy Innocents, infants slain by Herod in Bethlehem

**Orthros Morning Prayers, 9:00 am**  
**Divine Liturgy, 10:00 am**

#### **Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 2):**

When Thou, O Immortal Life, didst humble Thyself unto death, then didst Thou destroy death by the brightness of Thy Godhead. And when Thou didst raise the bowels of the earth, then all the heavenly powers exclaimed: 'O Christ, Thou art the Giver of Life! Glory to Thee, O our God!'

#### **Troparion for St. Joseph and King David (Tone 2):**

Proclaim, O Joseph, to David, the grandparent of God, the amazing wonders; for thou hast seen a Virgin great with child; for with the shepherds thou didst give glory, with the Magi thou didst worship, and by the angel it was revealed to thee. Wherefore, plead thou with Christ God to save our souls.

#### **Troparion of Christmas (Tone 4):**

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come, O Lord glory to Thee!

St. George is a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
The Most Reverend Metropolitan PHILIP, primate  
The Right Reverend Bishop ANTHONY, Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest  
[www.antiochian.org](http://www.antiochian.org)

### **Troparion of St. George (Tone 4):**

Since thou art a liberator and deliverer of captives, a help and succour of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender and fighter for kings, O great among martyrs, the victory-clad George: intercede with Christ God for the salvation of our souls!

### **Kontakion of Christmas (Tone 3):**

Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent in Essence; the earth offereth the cave to the unapproachable One; the angels with the shepherds glorify Him; and the Magi with the star travel on their way; for a new Child hath been born for our sakes, God before the ages.

### **Epistle Reading: Galatians 1:11-19**

Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, for was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my own people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 2**

When the wise men had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy Him." And he rose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "*Out of Egypt have I called My Son.*"

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "*A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.*"

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead." And he rose and took the Child and His mother, and went to the land

of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned of Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. and he went and dwelt in the city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "*He shall be called a Nazarene.*"

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## **Announcements and Upcoming Events**

*For a full calendar of events and services at St. George, consult the calendar on our website, [www.stgeorgeorthodox.org](http://www.stgeorgeorthodox.org).*

**Next Sunday, January 5**, we will celebrate the **Baptism of our Lord (Theophany)**. The Holy Water for the rest of the year will be blessed after the Divine Liturgy.

**A note on home blessings:** After next Sunday, I am happy to begin arranging visits for home blessings. The Orthodox Church recommends that each home be blessed by a priest with prayer and Holy Water each year. Please contact me at your convenience to come and bless your home. And there is no reason to hurry - we are not yet living in town, so I have no problem spreading home blessings throughout the year, as long as it takes to accommodate everyone! Nothing elaborate is required, and even a meal is not necessary. Feel free to ask if you have any questions.

**From Fr. Andrew and Kh. Patty:** A big THANK YOU for all of your Christmas cards, greetings and generous gifts! We were truly not expecting such generosity and we deeply appreciate it. We are blessed to be a part of your community, and we hope this is merely the first of many Christmases together!

Fr. Patrick Kinder of St. Ignatius Church in Madison, WI has graciously donated to us a box of CDs of their "Akathist of Thanksgiving" recording. The CDs are available in the basement for a suggested donation of \$15 each; all proceeds will go to St. George Church. Please see Fr. Andrew or Kh. Patty if you are interested in purchasing one.

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*Charles Dickens writes in A Christmas Carol, describing the spirit of Jacob Marley when he appears to his business partner in life Ebenezer Scrooge: "Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now."*

*This is a reference to 1 John 3:17 - "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (KJV)*  
*-Orthodox blogger John Sanidopoulos*