

**:: A Pastoral Encyclical for the New Year ::**  
**His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos in Greece**

The time of each of our lives is very limited and small in relation to eternity. We will not live forever on the earth. We are patient through the various trials of our lives, because we believe that the way we live our relationship with God and with others, will determine our way of life after our departure from this life. Because, though our life will end at some point, there life will not end, since there is life also after death, after the departure of the soul from the body.

Unfortunately many Christians nowadays have turned their attention to dates, to time, and they turn away from the eternal and the exalted, and do not seek to acquire the knowledge of God. Relevant are the words of the Apostle Paul: "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and impoverished elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain" (Gal. 4:9-11). It is terrible to observe the changes of time and not to be inspired towards the true purpose of our lives.

The Apostle Paul recommends: "Let us redeem the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). We must strive not to buy shares in the stock market, but for the time market, for only then will we find it before us in the future eternal life. We observe, however, that in our life there is the so-called "pollution of time". Just like contemporary people pollute areas with the products of their passions, so they pollute time, since they spend it on unnecessary things, and even worse is that they squander it on sinful acts, actions that constitute the denial of the will of God. Although our era wants to be called modern and mature, it is rather full of old philosophical and ideological streams that increase the agony of humanity.

... [T]his year we will be given the ability on behalf of the Church, both Local and Ecumenical, to see the greatness of Christianity, the value of apocalyptic discourse, the importance of the life of the gospel, the prospect of the future age, but at the same time our failure to live according to the spirit of the Gospel and the Orthodox life. So, the entire time of this year is an occasion for hope and repentance, optimism and self-criticism, hope and resurrection.

With these thoughts I wish you all a blessed new year and that God will fill you with heavenly and earthly gifts.

*~Read the entire message at [www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2013/12/a-pastoral-encyclical-for-new-year.html](http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2013/12/a-pastoral-encyclical-for-new-year.html)*

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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

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### January 5, 2014 – The Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ

**Orthros Morning Prayers, 9:00 am**  
**Divine Liturgy, 10:00 am**  
**Great Sanctification of the Waters, following Liturgy**

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#### **Gospel Reading at Orthros: Mark 1:9-11**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased."

#### **Troparion of the Theophany (Tone 1):**

By Thy baptism, O Lord, in the River Jordan, worship to the Trinity hath made its appearance; for the voice of the Lord did come forth to Thee with the testimony, naming Thee beloved Son; and the Spirit in the likeness of a dove, confirming the truth of the word. Wherefore, O Thou who didst appear and lighted the world, O Christ, glory to Thee!

#### **Kontakion of the Theophany (Tone 4):**

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, O Lord, and Thy light hath been shed upon us, who praise Thee with knowledge, saying, "Thou hast come and appeared, O unapproachable Light!"

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)

### Epistle Reading at the Liturgy: Titus 2:11-15, 3:4-7

My son Titus, the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world; awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds. Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

### Gospel Reading at the Liturgy: Matthew 3:1-17

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the granary, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

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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).*

**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!

**Today immediately after Liturgy, we will bless the Holy Water.** You may all come forward after the service with your containers to take some of the water home with you. (If you did not bring a container today, we have a few extras.)

What do we do with Holy Water? You can drink it, you can sprinkle it on your plants, you can use it at any time to anoint your forehead with the sign of the Cross. In short, think of it as a blessing from God and an extension of our prayers, and you can use it to bless yourself or anything in your home. What we should NOT do with it is pour it down a drain. If you need to dispose of old Holy Water, pour it on your plants or flowers.

**A note on home blessings:** The Orthodox Church recommends that each home be blessed by a priest with prayer and Holy Water each year. As soon as my family gets settled into our new home in Spring Valley, it will be my great joy to visit all of you, spend time with your families, and bless your homes with the blessing of the Jordan River. More information and a sign-up sheet will be available in the coming weeks. Nothing elaborate is required on your part, and even a meal is not necessary. Feel free to ask if you have any questions.

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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*Acquire a peaceful spirit, and around you thousands will be saved.*

*God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil—for the devil is cold—let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance.*

*~St. Seraphim of Sarov*