

## :: 14 New Year's Resolutions for Orthodox Christians ::

Part I, by Fr. Andrew Damick

*Around this time of year, many people start thinking about ways they can change for the better. While New Year's resolutions are not particularly a feature of the Orthodox faith, change certainly is, and resolving to change based on times and seasons is certainly part of our liturgical tradition. So adapting the cultural custom of New Year's resolutions to become a better Orthodox Christian seems perfectly fine to me. Anyway, here are some suggestions for Orthodox Christians resolving to change for the better in the New Year, things every Orthodox Christian can do.*

**1. Get serious about coming to church (more).** While many who read this are no doubt at least every-Sunday attenders at church, it is statistically true that only 26% of Orthodox Christians in America come to church weekly (the statistic is drawn from people who are actually involved in parish life, not from anyone who was ever baptized Orthodox; that statistic would be much worse). That's really a horrible percentage. If you're not coming to church weekly, why not? There are probably some good reasons out there, but most of those 74% almost certainly do not have good reasons. If you're not serious about coming to church weekly, it's time to get serious. This is eternal life we're talking about, not a religious club.

**2. Come to church on time.** It's kind of an in-joke that Orthodox people are always late to church. But why is that? We too often accept the excuse that we function on "Greek time" or "Syrian time," etc., but even Greeks and Syrians (and whoever else; insert your preferred culture here) seem to be able to adapt to show up to nearly everything else on time. Why can we show up on time for work, sporting events, movies, doctor's appointments, etc., but reserve our tardiness for an encounter with the King of Kings?

There are some kinds of events for which it doesn't much matter if you come at a particular time—parties, various kinds of social gatherings, etc.—but church services aren't one of them. There is a definite beginning and a definite ending. If you show up late, you are late. And if you leave early, you are skipping out.

What you show up on time for tells the world what you find important. It's what you find indispensable. And when you show up late to church, it also tells your fellow parishioners that you don't consider church very important.

And it also communicates it to your kids. And you can be assured that they will imitate you. Come at least ten minutes early. That says you are serious.

~ Read the entire article at <http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/roadsfromemmaus>

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*Any announcements for the Sunday bulletin? Please submit by Wednesday each week to Fr. Andrew, by email or phone. If you are not on the church's email list and would like to be, please let Fr. Andrew know.*



## St. George Orthodox Church of Spring Valley

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### January 4, 2015 – Sunday before Theophany

Matins (Morning Prayer), 9:00 AM :: Divine Liturgy, 10:00 AM

Today's Holy Bread and Coffee Hour: George and Lynette Forsa

Next Sunday: Beverly Malooley and family

**Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 5):** Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

**Troparion for the Forefeast of Theophany (Tone 4):** Make ready, O Zebulon, and prepare, O Nephtali, and thou, River Jordan, cease thy flow and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized. And thou, Adam, rejoice with the first mother, and hide not yourselves as ye did of old in paradise; for having seen thee naked, He appeared to clothe thee with the first robe. Yea, Christ hath appeared desiring to renew the whole creation.

**Troparion of St. George the Great Martyr (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 the Forefeast of Theophany (Tone 4):** Today hath the Lord appeared in the courses of the Jordan, crying to John and saying, Be not dismayed at my Baptism; for I have verily come to save Adam, the first to be created.

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

## Epistle and Gospel Readings at the Divine Liturgy

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my God.

### The Reading from St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (4:5-8)

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.

### The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark (1:1-8)

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes He Who is mightier than I, the strap of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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## Gospel Reading at the Blessing of the Waters

### The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. 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.

## Announcements and Upcoming Events

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

Upcoming Events and Services:

- **Today:** Blessing of the Holy Water at the end of the Liturgy. *Fr. Andrew will begin blessing homes this week. Please contact Father to set up your appointment!*
- **Tomorrow, Monday, Jan. 5:** Divine Liturgy for the Theophany of our Lord, 6:00 PM
- **Sunday, Jan. 18:** January Parish Council meeting
- **Sunday, Jan. 25:** St. George Church Annual Meeting and Sausage Breakfast. *Please mark your calendars! All members of our church should make every effort to attend.*
- **Sunday, Feb. 1:** The Lenten Triodion begins!

**From Fr. Andrew and Kh. Patty: A big THANK YOU for all of your Christmas cards, greetings and generous gifts!** We are blessed to be a part of the St. George community. May God grant all of you his abundant blessings in the new year!

**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. 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. 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. 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. Nothing elaborate is required on your part, and even a meal is not necessary. Feel free to ask if you have any questions.

### Raffle Tickets

Our friend Sally Favia of Apple Vacations has graciously donated to our church a trip for 2, three nights all-inclusive vacation at the Iberostar Paraiso Del Mar in Riviera Maya, Mexico. George Forsa is overseeing the sale of raffle tickets for \$10 each. **Most of them have been sold, but we have about 45 more. Please see George if you are willing to sell any of these additional tickets on behalf of the church.** The trip may be taken anytime between May 1 and Oct. 5, 2015, and we are asking all the tickets are sold by January 15 and the drawing will take place at our annual meeting, January 25.