

:: Pastoral Letter for Theophany 2016 ::
His Grace Bishop ANTHONY

As we celebrate this great Feast of Theophany or Epiphany, we know that the Birth of Christ and His work on earth was also the will of the Holy Trinity: it was a common will for the common good, so to speak, first of man's salvation, and, also, of all creation.

Originally, at least in the East, Christmas and Epiphany – the birth of Christ, His Baptism by John in the Jordan, and the pilgrimage of the Magi to the place of Jesus' birth – were one great feast and festival celebrating, especially emphasized at Epiphany, the fact that God became man. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity takes on human nature and restores its beauty and destiny.

Immediately following the feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord, at the Pre-feast or Fore-feast for Epiphany, the Aposticha verses on January 2nd read: "The Feast just past was glorious, O Savior, but the coming feast is more luminous. Before the angel announced Thy birth, now the Forerunner prepares for your mission on earth. The former had the pouring out of the martyr's blood in the death of the Innocents when Bethlehem cried, while on this feast, after the water is blessed, many become fruitful. There the star announced to the Magi; but now the Father reveals and the Holy Spirit confirms Thee to be the Savior of the world." May He who deigned to be baptized by John in the Jordan for our salvation and reveal the Holy Trinity, bless you and be with you always.

+Bishop ANTHONY
Bishop of Toledo
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Do you have an announcement for our bulletin? Please call or email Fr. Andrew no later than Friday each week for anything to be included in Sunday's bulletin.



St. George Orthodox Church
of Spring Valley

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Sunday, January 3, 2016

The Sunday before the Feast of Theophany
Matins: 9:00 AM :: Divine Liturgy: 10:00 AM

Epistle Reader: Kenneth Wiltse

Holy Bread/Coffee Hour: George and Lynette Forsa

Next Sunday's Holy Bread/Coffee Hour: Bev Malooley and family

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Troparion for the Forefeast of Theophany (Tone 4): Be ready, Zebulon; prepare thyself, O Naphthali! River Jordan, stay thy course and skip for gladness to receive the Sovereign Master, who cometh now to be baptized! O Adam, be glad with our first mother, Eve; hide not as you did of old in Paradise. Seeing you naked, He hath appeared now to clothe you in the first robe again. Christ hath appeared, for He truly willeth to renew all 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 for 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-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

THE EPISTLE

For the Sunday before the Theophany of Christ

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

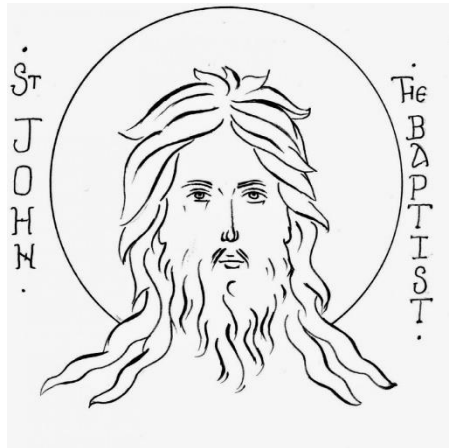
The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy. (4:5-8)

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 GOSPEL

For the Sunday before the Theophany of Christ

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."

Announcements and Upcoming Events

For a full calendar of events and services at St. George, see our website, www.stgeorgeorthodox.org.

Upcoming Events and Services:

- **Today:** Sunday school, downstairs immediately after Holy Communion.
- **This Wednesday, Jan. 6: The Feast of Theophany.** Divine Liturgy and the Blessing of the Waters, starting at 6:00 pm. *Holy Water will be available after this service and after next Sunday's Liturgy. Bring your Holy Water containers from last year if you have them; otherwise we have extras.*
- **Saturday, Jan. 9:** Vespers, 6:00 pm.
- **Next Sunday, Jan. 10: Sunday after Theophany.** Matins, 9am and Divine Liturgy, 10am. Epistle Reader: George Forsa. Holy Bread/Coffee Hour: Bev Malooley and family.

House blessings begin after this Wednesday's water blessing. Please contact Fr. Andrew to set up a date and time to have your home and/or workplace blessed with the Theophany Holy Water. *Please know it is not necessary to invite Fr. Andrew's entire family, or to provide a meal. All you need to have ready is a place to pray in front of an icon, and a list of living and departed for Fr. Andrew to remember in prayer.* Talk to Father if you have any additional questions.

Our church's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 31. All current members of St. George Church should make every effort to attend! Coffee hour will be a potluck; each household should plan to bring a simple dish, pastry, fruit, etc.

The 2016 Holy Bread and Coffee Hour schedule is now posted on the ladies' bulletin board downstairs. Please look over your assigned dates, and let Fr. Andrew know if any changes need to be made. Many thanks for all of your service!

Thank you to all who filled out and returned your building surveys! If you did not receive one, please let Fr. Andrew know. The letter contains a short survey, and it is very important that you respond to this, so we know how much support we can expect from all. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to talk with Father Andrew or with our building exploratory committee, Mark Kerasotes, Mike Kasap, and Matt Rowan. **Above all, PRAY for St. George Church, that the loving will of our good and holy God would be done!**