

THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY

Father Alexander Schmemmann has written that in baptism, water is “the sign and presence of the world itself.” Thus, all of fallen creation was renewed and restored when Christ was baptized. When we are present at the Great Blessing of the Waters during the Theophany Liturgy, we witness this endless act of Christ blessing the waters and transforming them—in the words of Bishop Kallistos (Ware)—into “an organ of healing and grace.” The world of matter becomes a means of communion with God. Father Alexander Schmemmann writes, “The blessing of water signifies the return or redemption of matter to this essential meaning. By accepting the baptism of John, Christ sanctified the water—made it the water of purification and reconciliation with God.” Father Alexander goes on further to say that all the world exists as an “epiphany” of God. All the created world is sacrament. “We need water and oil, bread and wine in order to be in communion with God and to know Him.” So the little jar of blessed water in our fridge contains a bit of this grace-filled universe; it is a sign of God’s infinite mercy and love; it is a lesson that God’s intention is a world of unity, love, humility, and healing... Fr. Alexander wrote that “the ‘holy water’ is revealed as the true, full, adequate water, and matter becomes again means of communion with and knowledge of God.” —*Nancy Forest*

A Church hymn for this week states that the previous feast—Nativity—was magnificent, “yet greater still” is the Feast of the revelation of the Trinity at Theophany. One understands then why there are so many services around this Feast of January 6. *Royal Hours on Wednesday, January 4 at 6 PM. Vespertal Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water on Thursday, January 5 at 11 AM. Matins of Theophany, on Thursday evening at 6:15 PM. Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water for Theophany on Friday, January 6 at 9 AM.*

The Pro-Life Cause, Orthodoxy, and Hope

Frederica Mathewes-Green, January 22, 2012

TODAY IS THE 39TH ANNIVERSARY of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion—through all 50 states, for any reason whatsoever. When I was a college student, back in the 70’s, I was in favor of legalizing abortion. I wasn’t a Christian then, but I was a feminist, the first feminist in my dorm, and I was loudly in favor of social revolution and women’s rights. I took it for granted that abortion was necessary, if women were ever going to be equal to men.

Of course, I didn’t think the number of abortions would ever be very high. Most of us, at that time, assumed that women wouldn’t want to have abortions, and would do so only in the most extreme situations. Things didn’t turn out that way. As of last June, the number of abortions since *Roe v. Wade* was 53,600,000. (NRLC estimate of 49,551,703 through 2007, and 1 million /yr since then). A number like that is hard to grasp. There’s a quote often attributed to Josef Stalin: “A single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic.” So people have tried to think of illustrations to make the numbers real. Many years ago, I heard a speaker say that, if the name of each child killed by abortion was inscribed on a monument like the Vietnam War memorial, the wall

would stretch for 50 miles. That was a long time ago, and the wall by now would be several times longer; but of course no such wall could be built, because those children had no names.

...Why should we care about this? Why should Orthodox Christians, in particular, care? Isn’t the pro-life cause something that Catholics get involved in, and evangelical Protestants? What business is it of ours?

You may be surprised to learn that abortion was common in the ancient Roman Empire. The methods were more dangerous than today (I should say, more dangerous to the mother; every abortion is lethally dangerous to the child). But those methods were nevertheless used by women who wanted to conceal sexual activity, or who were forced to have abortions by their husbands and lovers.

The ancient, pagan world was a harsh one. Not only were children aborted before birth, but a newborn child was not officially received into a family until its father picked it up and held it. If the father didn’t want the child he simply refused to take it up, and the child was legally abandoned. This was called “exposing” an infant; it would be placed in some public place, and the social

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fiction was that someone else might pick it up and care for it. Sometimes people did take in these babies, and rear them to be sold as slaves or put on the street as prostitutes. But, often enough, no one took the child before it was found by dogs or other animals, or died of exposure and starvation.

And this was legal. It was a harsh world. Christians stood out as different, in that world. They were different in seeing every human being as worthy of dignity, whether free or slave, male or female, Jew or Gentile (as St. Paul said in Galatians 3:21). One of the big differences between Christians and pagans was that Christians did not have abortions. From the earliest years, the Church Fathers spoke against abortion. Let me read you some of their statements.

This is from the *Didache*, a work which was written about the same time as the Gospels: “You shall not murder a child by abortion.” The *Letter of Barnabas*, written about the same time, repeats those words. “You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not murder a child by abortion.” Note the connection he makes there. This is not about sexual morality, it’s about loving your neighbor, who in this case is a helpless child. The *Letter to Diognetus*, probably written around 125, describes to a nonbeliever what Christians are like. He writes, “They marry, as do all others; they beget children, but they do not abort fetuses.” The *Apocalypse of Peter* says that, in heaven, aborted children are cared for by an angel named Temlakos. He writes, “The children shall be given over to the care-taking angel Temlakos, and those who slew the children will be

punished forever, for this is God’s will.”

Let’s pause a moment and ask: who slew them? When a woman aborts her child, who is to blame? Most people would say that it is the woman’s choice, so she bears the responsibility. But I learned how complex it can be some years ago, when I was working on a book titled *Real Choices*. My goal in the book was to find out why women have abortions, and figure out what pro-lifers can do to help them have better alternatives. In the process I went all over the country interviewing women who had had abortions, and I asked them to tell me what led up to their choice. What I found was that, in many tragic cases, the abortion hadn’t been her choice at all. ...

So it’s not up to us to decide who gets the blame. God alone reads the heart. Surely, we as an entire culture must shoulder some of the responsibility, for giving women the message that abortion can solve her problems, and she should be grateful to have a so-called “choice.” Yet it’s obvious that this “choice” is profoundly unnatural in biological terms; throughout history women would regard the premature end of pregnancy and death of an unborn child as a tragedy. But we’ve been through almost 40 years of brainwashing about how liberating abortion is, so we shouldn’t be too surprised that so many women end up in abortion clinics—and when it’s all over, are left to grieve alone. There is an enormous thundercloud of unspoken grief in America, due to the millions of women who bought the abortion lie, and now are haunted by that so-called choice. So there’s no room for blame. God sees the heart, and God knows. And whatever the woman’s role in this tragedy might be, surely there’s nothing as cold-hearted as the person who decided to go into business doing abortions all day long.

Tertullian says that for Christians, “Since murder has been once and for all forbidden, we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb. ... To interfere with a birth is merely an earlier way of killing a person. It doesn’t matter whether you take away a life that has been born, or destroy one that is coming to birth.” (*Apology* 9:8) Elsewhere he wrote, “We hold that life begins with conception, and that the soul also begins at conception; life has its commencement at the same moment and place that the soul does.” (*Apology* 27) St. John Chrysostom wrote, “Do you condemn the gifts of God, and fight against His laws? Childlessness is seen as a curse, but you seek it as though it were a blessing. Do you make the chamber of birth a place of slaughter? Do you teach the woman who is formed to give life to perpetuate killing instead?” (*Homilies on Romans* 24) St. Basil puts medicines that cause abortion in the same category as other kinds of killing. He writes, “The man

or woman is a murderer who gives a potion, if the person that takes it dies from it. So also are they who uses a medicine to procure abortion; and so are those robbers who kill on the highway.”

Our Orthodox Christian heritage is absolutely opposed to abortion and child-killing from its very beginnings. This stand against abortion and exposure of infants is, in fact, one of the things that attracted people to the Christian faith. Women were drawn to a religion that, for a change, would stop men from taking their children away.

Our faith’s affirmation of life from the moment of conception is evident in the passage in the Gospel of Luke, in which Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, and Elizabeth says that her unborn son leaped for joy at the sound of Mary’s voice. She says, “Why do I deserve such honor, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy.” (Luke 1:39-45) The unborn John the Forerunner recognized the presence of Christ and his mother, and Elizabeth, with prophetic insight, realized what was happening.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not become a human being on Christmas Day, but 9 months earlier, on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, when the angel appeared to the Virgin Mary and told her that she would conceive a child. The Forerunner did not become a human being on the day he was born; he was already a prophet and a servant of the Most High, even in his mother’s womb.

...There is actually no scientific debate about when life begins. From the moment of conception it is alive. From that moment it starts growing, fast. By 21 days, it has a heartbeat. It is definitely alive, and in fact if it was not alive she would not need an abortion, but would have a natural miscarriage. So “When life begins” is not something scientists, or even ordinary people, are confused about. It is human, too. If you looked at a cell from the growing unborn child under a microscope, you would say, “Yes, that’s human. That’s not chimpanzee, it’s not watermelon. It is human.” This living being is 100% human.

...So there are many, many women, and certainly some Orthodox Christian women, who have this in their past, and they grieve but don’t feel free to talk about it. I would urge anyone in that position to talk with your priest. Believe me, there’s nothing you can say to a priest that he hasn’t heard sometime before. He’s never going to be shocked. And priests often say that, when they hear

a confession, it makes them admire the person more, who love God so much that they’re willing to speak of painful things. So please don’t keep this in. If you hide this grief inside it feels even bigger and more overwhelming than needs to be. So schedule a talk or schedule a confession, and begin to be healed from this guilt. God forgives.

If you’ve been involved in an abortion, don’t let yourself be overtaken by despair, but remind yourself that that child is still alive, in heaven. Maybe it did not have a long earthly life, but its eternal life will go on forever, in the presence of God. Psalm 27:10 says, *Though my mother and my father reject me, you will take me up.* God the Father has taken that child up, as one of his own. And if you persevere on the path of holiness, one day you’ll be reunited with that child, in the place where all sorrow and sighing has fled away, and the tears have been wiped from every eye.

...Though abortion has been a fixture in America for 38 years, there is reason for hope. The first is that people can change their minds about this issue. I can give myself as an example. As I said, I was very pro-abortion back in my college days. One day I was home on vacation, and was reading my dad’s copy of *Esquire* magazine. In it there was an article titled “What I Saw at the Abortion.” As I read the description of a second-trimester abortion, I was horrified. Because I was anti-war, anti-death penalty, a vegetarian, anti-violence in every form. And I had to admit that abortion was the violent taking of a human life. It was completely incompatible with my other non-violent values.

So the first point of encouragement is—me. It is possible for people to change, even if they’ve been hardened defenders of abortion. If I can change, anyone can change.

The second reason for hope is that polls are just beginning to show a shift in America on this issue. It made the news in May 2009, when the Gallup organization released the surprising results of a poll. For the past 14 years, Gallup has been asking Americans, “With respect to the abortion issue, do you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?”

In 2006, 51% said they were pro-choice and 41% pro-life. But in May 2009, those numbers exactly flipped. For the first time, a majority said they were pro-life; 51% pro-life and 42% pro-choice.

If you stand up on this issue, you will be attacked. Pro-choice is still the socially-approved position, and it takes a lot of courage to publicly say that you stand for life. In every generation there’s an issue like this, that

draws a line between those who will stand up for what is right, and those who just go along. Only the bravest people take a stand, and continue to bear witness even when others mock them and misrepresent them; only the bravest keep standing when, from a worldly perspective, the cause looks lost. Only the most dedicated people are willing to keep working for change, when the struggle is all uphill and they reap nothing but rejection.

You are those people. And you are not alone. The angels and saints see you persevering in this labor, just as champions of earlier generations did their part. The struggle is not lost. Despite overwhelming pressure to

favor abortion, the tide of public opinion is beginning to turn. Young people are leading the way.

Your efforts on behalf of this cause, to help pregnant women and preserve the lives of unborn children, are seen by God and the angels, and will stand for eternity. You are the heroes of this hour—and, even if the hour looks dark, it truly is darkest before the dawn. Truth cannot be suppressed forever. You may wonder if the pro-choice side has won the day—but sooner or later, that day will end. No generation can rule from the grave. The time to get on the right side of history is now.

—*Frederica Mathewes-Green*

SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA, along with all the other jurisdictions (Antiochian, Greek, Serbian, etc.) have designated Sunday, January 21, 2017, as the “Sanctity of Life Sunday” in sorrowful remembrance of the Supreme Court ruling, known as *Roe Vs. Wade*, which legalized abortion on January 22, 1973. Hundreds of thousands of people, Christians and non-Christians participate each year in the March/Walk in Washington, DC and San Francisco, manifesting a spirit of peace, prayer and sorrow. This is not a “war on women” but a struggle to overcome forces that have very dark motives.

The motivation behind the Roe case was less about women’s rights and more about continuing the motivating force behind the Birth Control movement—eugenics—a racist pseudoscience that sought to control certain populations. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg revealed in a July 7, 2009 New York Times Magazine article, she and others commonly believed “at the time Roe was decided, there was concern about population growth and particularly growth in populations that we don’t want to have too many of.” Roe was the case the pro-abortion community showcased to ensure population control of blacks, the poor and other minorities. Norma McCorvey was on drugs, an alcoholic and was homeless. But as is the case with Planned Parenthood, charity and solving the root of the problem wasn’t their concern. (*the above was excerpted from www.toomanyaborted.com/roevwade/*)

On December 1, 2016, the Senate Judiciary Committee sent a letter to the FBI to formally refer, for criminal prosecution, four of the biggest Planned Parenthood affiliates, Planned Parenthood Federation of

America, and three of their closest business partners in the harvesting and sale of aborted baby body parts. The Senate Judiciary Committee’s report confirms that Planned Parenthood and companies like StemExpress partnered in a years-long criminal conspiracy to sell the body parts of aborted children for profit...Planned Parenthood covered up for the affiliates and deleted the guidelines (www.centerformedicalprogress.org). If one follows the money, one can see that there are powerful forces, having nothing to do with the pain, suffering, fear and options facing women.

Orthodox Christians are committed to the sanctity of life. It is wrong for us to call this a “right to life” issue, since from our point of view, life is not a “right” (and what would that “right” be founded on?) but a *gift*. A gift from God. We can witness to our gratitude to God for this gift by participating in the San Francisco “Walk for Life” on Saturday, January 21, 12:30 PM, at the Civic Center. I am arranging for transport to this event. Please see me if you are interested. —*Fr. Lawrence*

Some facts about the case

- Roe v. Wade allows abortion up to 3 months. **False.**
It allows abortion through the 7th month.
- Jane Roe’s pregnancy was a result of rape. **False.**
This pregnancy was not due to rape.
- Jane Roe aborted her child. **False.**
She gave birth to her child & placed her for adoption.
- Jane Roe is the poster girl for abortion. **False.**
In 1995, she became a ProLife advocate.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **ST SERAPHIM DAY:** We are honored to welcome our Archbishop Benjamin for the feast of St. Seraphim on Monday, January 2. We greet the bishop at 9:30 AM.
- **THEOPHANY:** Please bring containers so you can take home Holy Water. House blessings will commence immediately on Theophany. Please sign up and we can arrange times and dates.
- **MASTER PLANNING MEETING:** Tuesday, January 10 at 7 PM. The last meeting was very productive due to the enthusiastic participation of twenty or so parishioners. The January meeting will focus on preparing a report for the Parish Annual Meeting in February.
- **THE INITIAL MEETING** of the newly-formed "Hospitality Committee" chaired by Anthony Scott will take place on Thursday, January 12 at 6 PM, in the Parish Office. This committee, which will consist of about four "board members" and some support staff, will focus on evangelism and outreach. We are just starting up our programs and training (Fr. Lawrence wants to keep the group small for now), which is why the parish is just finding out about this committee. Certainly, there will be information to follow.
- **ORTHODOXY IN GUATEMALA:** You are invited to a presentation by Kendra Sophia Meshnik on Sunday, January 15, after the lunch, on her recent OCMC work in Guatemala. Kendra spent about four months in that country working at a medical clinic, run by the Orthodox Church. There are now 338 churches and more than 350,000 Orthodox faithful there. Come hear about this exciting evangelization.
- **SENIOR LUNCH FELLOWSHIP:** Thursday, January 19 at Noon.
- **WALK FOR LIFE, San Francisco: Rally (speakers)** from 12:30 to 1:30 PM. The Walk begins at 1:30 PM. Civic Center Plaza, San Francisco. Transport from the Church is being arranged. See Fr Lawrence if you are interested in a ride to SF.
- **WEDDING:** Tyler-Rose Counts will be joined in holy matrimony to Nicholas Hoffman on Sunday, January 22, at 4 PM. All are invited to the wedding service.
- **NOMADIC SHELTER:** Thursday, January 26, beginning about 6 PM. For more info, contact Ambrose Inlow at (707) 490-4700.
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:** Thursday, January 26, 7 PM, in the Parish Library.
- **THE KONEVETS CHOIR** from Russia (which visited us last year) will sing the responses at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, January 29, followed by a concert of folk music in the Parish Hall after the Lunch.

ANNUAL MEETING—February 5, 2017, 12:30 PM

All Parish Members are asked to attend in order to hear reports on parish life, expenses, income, plans and programs for 2017, and to vote for new Parish Council Members. All nominations for Parish Council are to be finalized with the Parish Council Secretary, Bonnie Alexander, no later than the week prior to the meeting, Sunday, January 15. We follow this procedure not to "control" the vote, but to avoid embarrassing on-the-spot nominees who are not parish members or may not be able to fulfill Diocesan and Parish qualifications.

Greek Dinner Dance and Classes:

THE PARISH SISTERHOOD will present a Greek Dinner Dance with Classes and Raffle. Review traditional Greek dances at **three great classes during January**, then join us in the Parish Hall on a Fast Free Friday for a fun night of dancing and food. Classes will be held January 17, 24 and 31 at 6 PM. The Dinner and Dancing night is Friday, February 10, 6 PM. *Cost:* \$35 for adults includes dance classes and dinner; \$25 dinner only; \$15 for children includes both dance classes and dinner. For reservations contact: Deanna Panages at dpanages@yahoo.com or Lisa Wespiser at lwespiser@yahoo.com

Cash or check payable to *St Seraphim Sisterhood*; Give checks or cash to Deanna or Lisa at church or mail to: St Seraphim of Sarov Sisterhood, 90 Mountain View Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95407

ADMONITION BY METROPOLITAN ANTHONY to the London Parish, on Sunday, November 6, 1994

All will agree that the Church of God, the Temple, is dedicated solely to prayer: prayers of intercession, repentance, glorification and supplication. Prayer of any kind, personal or corporate, takes concentration to be effective, to “lift up our hearts unto the Lord,” as we sing during the Anaphora. That focus is easily lost when we talk during services, or become distracted when others talk. Yes, children can make noise and be fussy, but it seems to me that our parents are really extraordinarily attentive to their children, and are able to manage the situation effectively and quickly. The noise of young children and babies is one thing—it’s a sign of life. On the other hand, talking by those who ought to be praying is the sign of spiritual trouble. Undeniably, it’s wonderful to come to church and see friends and family members and greet them with affection. This is possible to do without conversation. I encourage you to talk to God while in church through your prayers, hymns and thanksgiving, and to talk with visitors, guests and friends outside the church or in the Parish Hall. All will agree that besides being disrespectful towards God, conversations are disruptive for other people trying to pray. All of us, those in the Altar, the choir, the main body of the Church, and the Narthex—especially the Narthex (is it really necessary to talk when getting candles??)—have been talking during the Hours before Liturgy, and some during and after the Liturgy. Let’s be responsible about our prayers. The following sermon, which speaks to the issue, was given by the late and ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of London. —Fr. Lawrence

OUR CHURCH WAS a place where people could find quiet and silence; not only the silence of people who would not talk, but the deep silence of souls that were standing face to face with God.

In the last year this has changed, and many people have told us—not only the old members of the

congregation, but people coming from Russia [in our parish, converts] have told us how disappointed they were at the change that had occurred here in the last couple of years.

People come into the church, and instead of standing by the door and realizing where they are—being there like the publican who felt he was unworthy of entering the realm of God—they enter, buy candles and begin to walk about [in our parish, mostly they begin to talk] irrespective of the moment of the Liturgy.

So, I not only make an appeal—I tell you with all the conviction and all the authority vested in me, that this is inadmissible. These people who come to church must come to meet the Lord God; and the moment you are within these walls, you are in the place where two or three are gathered in His Name and He is in their midst. Unless you learn silence, unless you do not treat the church as a place where you can move about looking at icons in a distracted way, you never enter into communion with God; and in that case, there is no space for any one to come and receive Communion out of emptiness of soul.

So, be aware of this. Take my words seriously. It is only if we learn to be deeply silent in the presence of God, worshipfully silent, silent before the greatness of the One who has died for us but Who has risen to give us His life, that we can take part in the Liturgy, in the prayers, and also in Communion.

May God guide all of us, not only lay people, but priests, servers, all of us, into that deep silence of the soul where we can commune with one another because we are all in communion with the living God. Amen.

JOY OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

The bread on the paten and the wine in the chalice are to remind us of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the cross and death. And thus it is the very joy of the Kingdom that makes us remember the world and pray for it. It is the very communion with the Holy Spirit that enables us to love the world with the love of Christ. The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity and the moment of truth: here we see the world in Christ, as it really is, and not from our particular and therefore limited and partial points of view. —Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*

Joy, according to Fr. Alexander, is the very nature of the Eucharistic Liturgy: Once more, the joyful character of the eucharistic gathering must be stressed...The liturgy is, before everything else, the joyous gathering of those who are to meet the risen Lord and to enter with him into the bridal chamber. And it is this joy of expectation and this expectation of joy that are expressed in singing and ritual, in vestments and in censuring, in that whole ‘beauty’ of the liturgy which has so often been denounced as unnecessary and even sinful. —*For the Life of the World*

THE BLESSING OF HOMES

THE CUSTOM OF BLESSING homes during the Theophany season is of special beauty and significance. It is not simply a sentimental tradition without meaning, nor is it a custom whose meaning we have forgotten, like an old friend whose face we remember, but whose impact on our life has been forgotten.

When an Orthodox Christian believer moves into a new home, he dedicates his new home as the abode of a follower of Christ. He asks that God, the source of all goodness and the Giver of every perfect gift, to bless his house and all that is within it; he recalls that Jesus Christ, His Son, came to bring Salvation to it, even as He brought Salvation to the house of Zacchaeus; he prays that the Holy Spirit may abide in it, guiding those who dwell in it in the Paths of righteousness. On the Feast of Theophany we rededicate our home for its original purpose, just as we must periodically rededicate our life to Christ. We do it especially on this Feast because this is the day on which we remember in the Church Year the coming of Christ who began His Ministry when He descended into Jordan to be Baptized by St. John the Forerunner and Baptist. He enters again into our lives reminding us that we must “repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

An Orthodox Christian must dedicate not only himself and his house to the Lord, but his daily work and all his efforts as well. All things are to be done to the glory of God. That is why in the Orthodox Church, not only religious objects, such as icons, crosses, churches and vestments, are blessed, but also homes, fields, animals and all objects which are used in our daily life for the good of man. In this the Church expresses its faith that the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying action extends over the whole Creation. When the priest comes to bless the family and its house, the following rules should be observed:

- A lighted candle, an icon, and a wide bowl for Holy Water should be placed on the table.
- All radios, televisions, etc. should be turned off.
- All present in the house should come together and stand at the table.
- Those who are able should join in the singing.
- The first names of those for whom special prayers are to be offered, including all the members of the family and especially those living in the house, should be clearly printed on a sheet of paper with a clear distinction between the living and the dead. (*Thanks to Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco for this article*)

There is a House Blessing sign-up sheet in the Narthex—some days and times are listed. Please sign up for the day/time that works for you. If none of those days/times are convenient, please email Fr. Lawrence at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net or call the parish office at 707-584-9491 and another time will be arranged for you.

PROSPHORA OFFERINGS

ONE OF THE GREAT privileges and responsibilities of the Orthodox Christian is to make an offering at each Divine Liturgy. This offering is a gift back to God—in time, money and talent—in thanksgiving for what He has given us. There is another offering that we should make, one of paramount importance. From the beginning of the Church’s existence, each Sunday the faithful would bring gifts of money, food, bread and wine to be used for the Church or given to the poor. A portion of the offered bread and wine would be used for Eucharistic offering, and prayers were made for the health and salvation on behalf of those who gave these gifts and for those who had died. The essence of all this has not changed in all these centuries. The small “prospora” bread loaves are brought into the Altar each Sunday with a list of names of those living and departed. The priest prays for each person by name, taking out a small particle of the bread from each loaf and placing it on the plate (disks) holding the bread which will be the Eucharistic bread. The priest is praying for you and **with** you, not **instead** of you. As we pray, all the saints pray with us to the Lord. After Holy Communion those particles, which represent each person, are placed into the Chalice and mingled with the Body and Blood. In doing these things, we refer all things to God, the Creator and Fashioner, and give thanks to Him for all things. The witness of the saints and the Tradition is that the prayers offered before the Liturgy are indeed very powerful. This power, from the Lord, of intercession, sanctification and gratitude is something that must go with us as we leave the Liturgy, and spill over into our daily life. Want to know more? Those who would like for their prayer lists to be in the Altar for each Sunday Liturgy are asked to make arrangements at the candle desk.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JANUARY 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - New Year's / St. Basil • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy <i>No Agape today</i> • 5 PM, Vespers and Akathist for Feast of St. Seraphim	2 - St. Seraphim • 9:30 AM, Greeting of Archbishop Benjamin and Divine Liturgy, Festal Luncheon to follow	3	4 - Theophany Prefeast • 6 PM, Royal Hours	5 • 11 AM, Vesperal Liturgy and Water Blessing • 6:15 PM, Festal Matins for Theophany	6 - THEOPHANY • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and Water Blessing	7 • 4:30 PM, Panikhida for Barbara McMillian • 5 PM, Great Vespers
8 - Synaxis of St John (moved) • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	9	10 • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting	11 • 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i> • 6 PM, Vespers	12 • 9 AM, Piroshki prep • 6 PM, Hospitality Committee Mtg.	13 • 9 AM and 2:30 PM, Piroshki prep	14 • 9 AM, Piroshki prep • 5 PM, Vespers
15 - St. Paul of Thebes • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • <i>Presentation on Guatemala Mission, Kendra Meshnik</i>	16	17	18 • 6 PM, Vespers	19 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, Feast of St. Mark of Ephesus • Noon, Senior Lunch	20	21 • 4:15 PM, Wedding Rehearsal • 5 PM, Great Vespers
22 - Apostle Timothy • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 4 PM, <i>Counts/Hoffman Wedding</i>	23	24 • 10 AM, Akathist to St. Xenia of Petersburg	25 • 6 PM, Vespers	26 • 6 PM, Nomadic Shelter • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	27 - St. John Chrysostom • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, Feast of St. John Chrysostom	28 • 3:30 PM, Catechism on <i>Holy Baptism</i> • 5 PM, Vespers
29 - Zachaeus Sunday • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy (<i>sung by the Konevets Choir</i>) • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal, Concert by the Konevets	30	31	February 1 • 6 PM, Great Vespers with Lity	2 - Meeting of the Lord • 8:30 AM, Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord	3	4 • 3:30 PM, Catechism on <i>Chrismation</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers