

# THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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## NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS TO ALL

**T**HE future remains unknown to us, but I hope and pray that everyone has a blessed New Year. The inevitable theme that arises with the New Year is precisely that of time itself, the unstoppable passage of time, a current; where is time carrying us? "Time waits for no one" sang the Rolling Stones.

The Blessed St Augustine of Hippo left a famous passage in which he brilliantly describes our struggle with the very concept of time: "What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words? Yet what do we speak of, in our familiar everyday conversation, more than of time? We surely know what we mean when we speak of it. We also know what is meant when we hear someone else talking about it. What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I

want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know."

Our lives are in God's hands, our every breath is a gift from Him. Time is God's gift to us. We realize that time leads us to our deaths, but it also leads us to eternity. Someone wrote that "Time will cease to be when the Lord comes." Since we are today about 365 days closer to that reality than our last New Year's celebration, it would seem that we, as servants of God, need to continually think about the direction of our lives and our use of time. For we do not have an endless store of time. Only God, our loving Master, knows the "amount" allotted to each and every one of us. It is a gift that we must not squander. 🙏



## PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

**B**less the crown of the coming year with Thy goodness...Bestow Thy good things from above upon all Thy people, as also health and salvation, and good furtherance in all things. Deliver Thy Holy Church, this city, and all cities and lands from every evil assault, and vouchsafe unto them peace and tranquility; and grant that we may always offer thanksgiving unto Thee, the Father Who is from everlasting, together with Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thine All-Holy, and Good, and Life-Creating Spirit, God glorified in one Essence, and to hymn Thine All-Holy Name.

## FEASTS OF THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR

**O**N JANUARY 1 we celebrate two feasts and one civil holiday: First, we mark the day of the *Circumcision of Jesus Christ*, which occurred on the eighth after His birth, according to the Law of Moses. Why would we care about this, especially since circumcision is no longer necessary for our inclusion into the New Covenant with God? St. Luke briefly describes the event, one of great humility of our God: "the days for the Child to be circumcised were fulfilled [eight days], and His Name was called Jesus, the Name called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21). In this ceremony of naming and circumcising, the Church proclaims the real and full human nature of the Child: He is fully man, fully divine, not a hybrid, since it was a union of the two natures in the Person of the Son of God. We rejoice to proclaim the incarnation, because when *we* are baptized, and united to Christ we become members of His Body, which is the Church—and through this union our salvation is effected by faith, repentance and the keeping of the commandments. Secondly, we commemorate St. Basil the Great, who reposed in 379 AD at the age of 49. We celebrate the Liturgy on St. Basil on his feast. Finally, we will meet 2021. We will thank God for His providence in our lives during the past year, for those blessings known and unknown to us. We will ask for His help in the coming year, as we strive to keep His commandments, to love Him, to glorify Him with our lives and to care for one another. Then, on January 2 we celebrate the memory of the Repose of St. Seraphim, our patron. Times for Church Services are shown in the calendar. 🙏

## EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** is held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month—January 13 and 27. Volunteers: please arrive around 4 PM to help set up. This Food Bank is an important way in which our parish does outreach to the community.
- **THEOPHANY**—January 6: Each year at Theophany we rededicate our home to Christ and re-sanctify it and ourselves—with the Holy Water from the Church. During the time of the pandemic the blessing of Holy Water is more important than ever. My plan for Theophany and the weeks following: visit each home and bless the outside (at the very least) and have you bless the inside. The usual list/time-table will be posted online just after New Year's Day.
- **HOLY WATER of THEOPHANY:** The practice of blessing water on the day of Christ's Baptism was already existent in the 3rd century. St. John Chrysostom calls this water "agiasma" — a holy thing. It has been known from ancient times that the Holy Water of Theophany does not go bad. This holy water is used to sprinkle and bless icons, liturgical articles, priestly vestments and crosses. It is also used to bless houses, food, automobiles and other articles. When received with faith, it has the power to cure both physical and spiritual infirmities. Although holy water cannot replace Holy Communion in any way, it can be taken by those who are deprived of the consolation of the Sacrament. During times of despondency, confusion and spiritual turmoil it offers tranquility and relief. For this reason Christians keep this blessed water in a special place in their homes and partake of it at any time. The feast day of Theophany is also called Epiphany. Both terms indicate that God has revealed Himself to the world in Jesus the God and Man, the Messiah, who reveals to us that God is a Trinity in unity—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, worshipped and glorified.
- **PROSPHORA/COMMEMORATION BOOKLETS:** Don't forget to renew your commemoration booklets for 2021.
- **THE PLAYGROUND** equipment was dismantled on Tuesday in preparation for a new set, arriving on Jan. 31, courtesy of an anonymous donor. Many thanks to the crew that came to do the work. The old set had some rot, stripped bolts, and was in poor condition after providing many years of fun for our parish children.
- **THE PARISH ANNUAL** is to be held, according to our parish by-laws, on the first Sunday of February. For obvious reasons, this year's meeting will be postponed. However, financial and organizational reports will be distributed. Our Parish Council Members have all agreed to continue serving until such time as we can hold elections.
- **MEMORY ETERNAL:** Brigid Sturgeon, long time member of our parish (although home bound for the last ten years), reposed peacefully in the Lord on Wednesday, December 30. May God grant her the Kingdom. Times for funeral services to be announced.

### WORDS OF COMFORT FROM THE SAINTS

The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who fills the whole universe, passes through all believing, meek, humble, good, and simple human souls, dwelling in them, vivifying and strengthening them. He becomes one spirit with them and everything to them – light, strength, peace, joy, success in their undertakings, especially in a pious life, and everything good – “going through all understanding, pure and most subtle spirits” (Wisdom of Solomon 7:23). “We have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13). All pious people are filled with the Spirit of God similarly as a sponge is filled with water.”

—*St. John of Kronstadt, reposed 1908*

We have the power of the Holy Cross, our holy symbol, the divine grace of Christ, only as long as we have the holy marking of the Holy Baptism, meaning we have denied the devil and sided with Christ, and received the Holy Marking, the seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. —*St. Paisios of the Holy Mountain, reposed 1994*

We know that the Lord, while in the flesh, was kind to all people, even those who persecuted Him—the Almighty God. He showed us how to avoid evil and not oppose it. He said so Himself [cf. Matt. 5:39]. Not opposing evil means preserving one's inner peace. Opposing evil is evil; it involves a desire to return evil for evil, on which the fallen spirits thrive. However, when they attack us and find that we do not oppose them, then our peacefulness disarms them; and they are defeated. Therefore, we must try to always pray like this: “Lord, help me to preserve my inner peace, teach me to be calm and peaceful and kind, just like Thine angels.” —*Elder Thaddaeus of Vitovnica, reposed 2003*

# PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

# JANUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>December 27</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>  <b>No Vespers</b>	<b>31</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers/Feast of St. Basil and Circumcision of XC</li> </ul>	<b>JANUARY 1</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil</li> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers/Feast of St. Seraphim</li> </ul>	<b>2 - St. Seraphim Day</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Feast of St. Seraphim</li> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>3 - St. Genevieve of Paris</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:45 AM, Panikhida for Barbara McMillian (10 yr)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Royal Hours of Theophany</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM, Vesperal Divine Liturgy, Great Blessing of Water</li> <li>• 6 PM, Festal Matins</li> </ul>	<b>6 - Holy Theophany</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>	<b>7 - St. John the Baptist</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers &amp; Matins</li> </ul>
<b>10 - St. Gregory of Nyssa</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Baptism of Ania and Matthew Rademacher</li> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, Great Blessing of Water (outside)</li> </ul>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 PM, Men's Fellowship</li> </ul>	<b>13</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i></li> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> <li>• 7 PM, Scripture Study</li> </ul>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	<b>16</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers &amp; Matins</li> </ul>
<b>17 - St. Anthony the Great</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> <li>• 7 PM, Scripture Study</li> </ul>	<b>21</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting</li> </ul>	<b>22</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	<b>23</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers &amp; Matins</li> </ul>
<b>24 - New Martyrs of Russia</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy (Women's Quartet)</li> </ul>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 PM, Men's Fellowship</li> </ul>	<b>27</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i></li> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> <li>• 7 PM, Scripture Study</li> </ul>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	<b>30</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers &amp; Matins</li> </ul>
<b>31 - Sts. Cyrus and John</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>						

• The Wednesday evening Scripture study with Fr. James Jorgenson will be via Zoom, link provided each week.