

Vespers on Saturday is a celebration and proclamation of the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It focusses on those events in order to prepare us for Holy Communion the next day and reminds us that we are joined to the Savior Christ and share NOW in the Kingdom of God. If you are not familiar with Saturday evening Vespers, I challenge you to begin with attendance at least once or twice a month to see what it's all about and to be edified by the joyful hymns, psalms and spiritual songs about faith in Christ, the Victor over death—and in that joy, receive the grace to overcome despondency, fear, anxiety and weak faith. We very much need the weekly reminder that “the Lord is King, He is robed in majesty.” Let's tend more towards maximalism rather than minimalism as a sign of our love for God and for worship together. —*Fr Lawrence*

One need only to open the Holy Bible to discover Who God is. No Christian needs to be a theologian or to be expected to offer theological interpretation of the Holy Scriptures to read it. People who are seeking to find God in their lives will definitely be helped by taking only a few minutes from their busy lives by turning to the New Testament for answers. One may begin by reading slowly and methodically the Gospels i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And then to Saint Paul's Letters or Epistles. If anyone needs assistance and guidance they turn to their local parish priest who may possibly have organized a study bible group that one can join. However, it is up to the individual to make the effort and to seek help. The New Testament has been translated in every known language and can be purchased at any local bookstore or through the local parish...According to our Holy Orthodox Church the Holy Scripture is divinely inspired and therefore the word of God. When one begins to explore the Holy Bible, he or she should do it with a sincere, open, and contrite heart. God speaks to us when we have faith even as small as a mustard seed. Jesus says, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” [Matthew 17:20]. Faith, my beloved, IS A GIFT OF GOD, and an assent to the Truth, which benefits the soul. A special gift by Christ which causes things to happen beyond man's power and understanding. —*Father George Konstantopoulos*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, January 14, 2024

- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Seven:
By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death; to the thief, Thou didst open Paradise. For the Myrrh-bearers, Thou didst change weeping into joy, and Thou didst command Thy Disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that Thou art risen, granting the world great mercy.
- TROPARION OF THEOPHANY, Tone One:
When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest; for the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, and called Thee His beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of His Word. O Christ, our God, Who hast revealed Thyself, and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee.
- KONTAKION OF THEOPHANY, Tone Four:
On this day Thou hast appeared unto the whole world, and Thy light, O Sovereign Lord, is signed on us who sing Thy praise: and chant with knowledge: Thou hast now come, Thou hast appeared, O Thou Light Unapproachable.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Jan. 13: 5 PM, Great Vespers and Confessions
6 PM, Visit of the Icon of St. Anna
- Sunday, Jan. 14: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Noon, Agape Meal
12:30, Spiritual Lesson in Protection Church
- Wednesday, Jan. 17: 6 PM, Vespers, Feast of St Athanasius the Great
- Thursday, Jan. 18: 6 PM, Men's Fellowship Dinner, *Parish Hall*
7 PM, Online Bible Study with Fr. James
- Friday, Jan. 19: 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions

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- Saturday, Jan. 20: 8:30 AM, *Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity in SF*
Noon, *Walk for Life in SF*
5 PM, Great Vespers and Confessions

The Feast of Theophany, which is the core and climax of the season of the Incarnation and Revelation of God become man—concludes on January 14, the *Leave-taking* of the Feast. We will sing the hymns of the feast for the last time at Vespers on Saturday and at the Sunday Liturgy. The Nativity season, begun on November 15 with the Advent Fast, will conclude on the fortieth day after Christmas, February 2, with the Feast of the *Meeting of the Lord in the Temple*. The Vigil for that feast will be served on Thursday, February 1 at 6 PM, and the Liturgy the following morning at 9 AM in the Protection Church. Candles will be blessed as a reminder that Christ is the Light of the world, as St Symeon says in his prayer *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace...*

Students, teachers and parents (indeed, everyone) are invited to attend the brief *Spiritual Lesson* on Sunday, January 14 at 12:30 PM in the Protection Church. Mentorship will begin again the following Sunday.

The miracle working Icon of St Anna ([2022 visit here](#)) from St. Tikhon's Monastery in PA will be brought to St Seraphim by Archimandrite Abbot Sergius for a Supplication Service and veneration on Saturday, Jan. 13. We expect the Icon to arrive at the end of Vespers on Saturday; Fr Sergius estimates about 6 PM.

The Saint Seraphim Men's Fellowship will gather for dinner in the Parish Hall on Thursday, January 18 at 6 PM. All the men of the parish are invited. Please let Daniel DeCarlo know you are coming so preparations can be made. He can be reached at (716) 861-4046.

The [2024 Walk for Life](#) will take place on January 20 in San Francisco. Please speak with Fr Lawrence if you are interested in car-pooling to Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF for the 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy, and the Walk which begins at Noon at the Civic Center. Learn more at [Orthodox Christians for Life](#) website.

The Parish Council will gather for its monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 24, after Vespers.

The Parish Members are expected to gather for the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 4, 2024, in accordance with the Parish By-

laws. The meeting will begin after the Divine Liturgy at 12:30 PM. The Annual Report Booklet will be ready to distribute on Saturday, January 27.

Sunday Epistle ~ Ephesians 6:10-17. Brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...

Sunday Gospel ~ Luke 18:35-43. At that time, as Jesus was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Have your waist girded with truth (verse 14). The whole arsenal of the fighter or soldier hangs from their waist belt. That is why St. Paul points out that belief in the truth is vital for the Christian...If someone has no knowledge of the truth of the Gospel or of the truth of the dogmatic teachings of the Church, and does not have an authentic faith, how can they possibly prepare themselves? This is impossible! Truth, therefore, is a thing of absolute necessity.