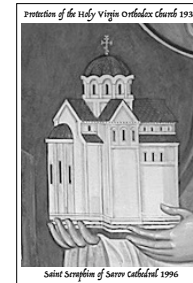


**Sometimes people think** that the blessing of water and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it over everyone and everything is a “paganism” which has falsely entered the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God in the Old Testament, and that in the Christian Church it has a very special and important significance. It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has been immersed in the streams of the Jordan, all matter is sanctified and made pure in Him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the wickedness of men. In the Lord’s epiphany all creation becomes good again, indeed “very good,” the way that God Himself made it and proclaimed it to be in the beginning when “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen 1.2) and when the “Breath of Life” was breathing in man and in everything that God made (Gen 1.30; 2.7). The world and everything in it is indeed “very good” (Gen 1.31) and when it becomes polluted, corrupted and dead, God saves it once more by effecting the “new creation” in Christ, his divine Son and our Lord by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Gal 6.15). This is what is celebrated on Epiphany, particularly in the *Great Blessing of Water*. The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world—through its “prime element” of watering in the perspective of the cosmic sanctification and glorification of the Kingdom of God brought to the world by Christ and the Spirit. It tells us that man and the world were indeed created and saved in order to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19), the “fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1.22). It tells us that Christ, in Who in “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” is and shall be truly “all, and in all” (Col 2.9, 3.11). It tells us as well that the “new heavens and the new earth” which God has promised through His prophets and apostles (Is 66.2; 2 Peter 3.13; Rev 21.1) are truly “with us” already now in the mystery of Christ and His Church. Thus, the sanctification and sprinkling of the Epiphany water is no pagan ritual. It is the expression of the most central fact of the Christian vision of man, his life and his world. It is the liturgical testimony that the vocation and destiny of creation is to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19). —[Fr Thomas Hopko](#)

**The Annual Parish Membership Meeting** will be held on Sunday, Feb. 2 at 12:30 PM. The report booklets will be distributed by Sunday, Jan. 26. A Parish Member is one who regularly worships, confesses, communes and makes an offering of financial support here (this is not a club, so there are no dues). It is hoped that all parish members will attend. —*Fr. Lawrence*

# ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

## PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



**January 12, 2025**



• RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION, Tone Four:

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of the Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse, and elatedly told the Apostles: death is overthrown, Christ God is 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.

• TROPARION OF THE MARTYR TATIANA, Tone Four:

Strengthened by the might of faith, O honorable one, thou didst contest lawfully for Christ God, O glorious Tatiana, for thou didst endure every affliction, and didst put the enemy to shame by thy steadfast stand. Wherefore, do thou deliver us from the malice of the evil one.

- 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, January 11: 4:30 PM, Panikhida for Lew Vladimir Baer, Alla Keyes and Barbara McMillian  
5 PM, Great Vespers/Confessions
- Sunday, January 12: 8 AM, Divine Liturgy in Protection Church  
9:40 AM, Reception of catechumens  
10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
11:30 AM, Church School
- Wednesday, January 15: 5:30 PM, Akathist  
6 PM, Vespers
- Thursday, January 16: 7 PM, Online Scripture Study with Fr James
- Friday, January 17: 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions

**Whether you are searching** for a new church home or just visiting, we welcome you and hope your experience at the Divine Liturgy will be edifying and spiritually nourishing. If you have a prayer request, are looking for more information about the Orthodox Faith, would like to join the parish, or would like to speak with Fr Lawrence or one of the other priests, we invite you to fill out a visitor information card and leave it at the candle desk, and to join us for lunch following the Divine Liturgy. Please be aware that Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves by fasting, prayer and a recent Confession.

**Many Years and congratulations** to Daniel Gonet and Dominic Tufo, to be received as catechumens on Sunday, before the Divine Liturgy. Please give them a warm welcome.

**One of the key ministries** in the parish is fulfilled by those working at the Candle Desk. They do what they do in order to serve us. This Sunday, Catherine Carpenter, the Candle Desk Coordinator, will be available in the parish hall to talk about what happens before, during and after the Divine

Liturgy and other services. Come by, offer a word of thanks, and perhaps consider helping out now and then.

**Orthodox Christians dedicate** their homes to God in many ways: prayer, an icon corner, harmony between family members; the singing of hymns and the bringing of Holy Water by the priest to sanctify the home and banish the presence of any intrusive and evil spirits and to cleanse the home tainted by our sins. Sin isn't a "one and done" thing. As a fire leaves the smell of smoke, so sin leaves a residue in and around us. The blessing of the home is a cleansing of that sin and an affirmation that the home belongs not to us, but to God, and is an "outpost" of the Church. It's a joyous and victorious act of faith in God. —*Fr Lawrence*

### **Walk for Life in San Francisco, Saturday, January 25, Noon:**

Transportation to the *Walk* is being arranged. Speak with Fr Lawrence if you would like to come. We will caravan to Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF for an 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy/breakfast, and from there we go to the Civic Center for the *Walk*.

**Several parish members** have asked for some minor points of church etiquette. For example, we should actually do what the words of the Service say. • When the Deacon exclaims: "Wisdom. Stand Upright" we should all stand. Why, should be obvious in the moment. • When the Gospel comes out, we all stand in reverence during that procession. • If you are late in arriving to the Liturgy (last week's bulletin discussed that already) please notice if the Altar servers, the Deacon with the Gospel and the Priests are coming out of the Altar, so you don't get caught up in their procession. It's so awkward. • When approaching the Chalice to receive Holy Communion, please say your name clearly. • Parents: please don't bring snacks, toys and coloring books to the Liturgy to keep kids occupied. Inevitably, kids end up sprawled on the floor, which is not appropriate. Having a young child look through a soft covered picture prayerbook during Divine Liturgy is much more appropriate than playing with toys or coloring during worship. The goal should be to engage a young child in worship not simply to quiet them so they are not a distraction. If children choose to explore during Liturgy, with a parent, and want to kiss and touch icons, that is fine. Adults are asked not to discourage this type of learning simply because they might find this type of behavior to be distracting. • Pray for each other and especially enjoy, help out and rejoice with the children.