

Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized (none); Home:* Bob Brewster, John Mahalchak (son). Nancy Shaytar, Natalie Tooeh, William Warnak. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Natalie Popovich, Michael Soroka.

➤ **Vigil Lights** From **Mat. Nancy K. Mell & Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family. From **Doris Wasilko** for the health of Nancy Shaytar on her birthday and the Wasilko family. From **Marsha Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family; Happy Birthday and Many Years to Nancy Shaytar. From **Charles A. Wasilko** for the departed servant, Nick Yurkowski; for the health of sisters, Doris and Marsha. From **Michael Beckett** for the departed servants, Greg Beckett, Mike Petkash, Olga Petkash, and Don Petkash. From **Lindy Hamilton** for the health of the Scott and Hamilton families; successful tonsillectomy for 3 yr old niece, Rowyn Elizabeth on 1/13/25. From **Mr. & Mrs. Richard Blaha** for the departed servants, parents, brother, family, and newly departed; for the health of family, friends, siblings, and serving soldiers; for special intentions, peace, anniversaries, and birthdays. From **Irene Kulchock** for the departed servant, Frank Kulchock, Stephen Pravlochak, Jan Pravlochak, Richard Kulchock, and Mary Pravlochak. From **John Mahalchak family** in memory of deceased family and friends; for the health of family & friends. From **Robbie Robes** for the departed servants, Thomas Sr., Georgiann, Thomas Jr, George, & Johanna. From **John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilkova and Matthew Heuer on his birthday. From **Anonymous** for Loni. From **Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servants, Amelia, Mom & Dad, grandparents, Marie, Nicholas, Anna, and Frank, and newly departed, Uncle Charles and James; for the health of my family; special intentions. From **Nancy M. Shaytar** for the departed servant, husband, George

➤ **The monthly donation sheet** for 2025 is available at the candle desk. Please note that the monthly donation for bulletins has been reduced to \$30 since we have discontinued the Vestal color covers.

St Nicholas Church will strive to glorify God through Orthodox Christian worship, sincere love and care for one another, and service to those in need around us.

Why was Jesus Baptized?

Jesus sanctified Baptism by being Himself baptized. If the Son of God was baptized, what godly man is he that despises Baptism? But He was baptized not that He might receive remission of sins, for He was sinless; but being sinless, He was baptized, that He might give to them that are baptized a divine and excellent grace. "For since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise partook of the same" (Heb. 2:14), that having been made partakers of His presence in the flesh we might be made partakers also of His Divine grace: thus Jesus was baptized, that thereby we again by our participation might receive both salvation and honor.

According to Job, there was in the waters the dragon that "draws up Jordan into his mouth" (Job 40:23). Since, therefore, it was necessary to break the heads of the dragon in pieces, He went down and bound the strong one in the waters, that we might receive power to "tread upon serpents and scorpions" (Lk. 10:19). The beast was great and terrible. "No fishing-vessel was able to carry one scale of his tail": destruction ran before him, ravaging all that met him. The Life encountered him, that the mouth of Death might henceforth be stopped, and all we that are saved might say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55). The sting of death is drawn by Baptism.

For you go down into the water, bearing your sins, but the invocation of grace, having sealed your soul, suffers you not afterwards to be swallowed up by the terrible dragon. Having gone down dead in sins, you come up quickened in righteousness. For if you have been "united with the likeness of the Savior's death" (Rom. 6:5), you shall also be deemed worthy of His Resurrection. For as Jesus took upon Him the sins of the world, and died, that by putting sin to death He might rise again in righteousness; so you also by going down into the water, and being in a manner buried in the waters, as He was in the rock, are raised again "walking in newness of life".



Whether you're searching for a new church home or just visiting, we're glad you're with us today. If you have a prayer request, are looking for more information about the Orthodox Faith, would like to join our parish, or would like to speak with Fr Thomas, we invite you to use the QR Code as your offering today. Please join us downstairs following the service. We want to get to know you! God bless you!



This Week

Sunday, January 5: Eve of Theophany

10:00 am Divine Liturgy / Church School
No evening Festal Vigil

Monday, January 6 *No Festal Services*

Tuesday, January 7 *No Services or Office Hours*

Wednesday, January 8 *No Services or Bible Study*

Thursday, January 9

9:00 am Daily Matins

9:30 am Office Hours

Saturday, January 11

3:30 pm Exploring Orthodoxy

4:30 pm Confessions

5:00 pm Parish Vigil

Sunday, January 12

10:00 am Divine Liturgy / Church School

To our Visitors: Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting. Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, *Rector*
Deacon Luke Loboda, *Attached*
Deacon John Skowron, *Attached*
Rdr James Wargo and Danielle Bartko, *Choir Dirs*

Eve of the Theophany of Christ

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org

January 5, 2025

Announcements

➤ This week we will be introducing all parishioners to **our new online giving portal, ChurchTrac**. We are encouraging everyone to consider moving to this secure and easy method of financially supporting our parish. The amount of bookkeeping time has increased greatly with the number of parishioners. Handling cash and checks is fraught with security and accuracy issues. Online giving reduces bookkeeping time and gives everyone an instant status of their giving at any time. However, those who wish to maintain giving via envelopes will be provided with envelopes for home and at church. Complete information will be provided this week. Please see Kristie Mertz or Fr Thomas if you have questions or for more information.

➤ Please note that **the schedule for this week has been modified** to accommodate Fr Thomas's recovery from his recent surgery, this past Friday,. During the rehabilitation period (of up to six months), his ability to use his left arm will be initially limited but should increase with time. We ask for your prayers and patience as he undergoes this process.

➤ **2025 Calendars** are available in the vestibule. Thank you to Szal Funeral Home of McKees Rocks for their continued support.

➤ The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on Sunday, January 26. Only members in good standing may participate. Reports are due to Deb Burgess by Sunday, January 12,

Hymns and Readings for Sunday, January 5

Tone 3 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let the heavens rejoice!
Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.
He has trampled down death by death.
He has become the first born of the dead.
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
and has granted to the world//
great mercy.

Tone 4 Troparion of the Forefeast

The River Jordan was turned back by the mantle
of Elisha,
after Elijah had been taken up to heaven.
The waters were parted in two,
and the stream became a dry path.
This was truly a type of baptism,
by which we pass over the stream of life.//
Christ has shone forth in the Jordan to sanctify
the waters.

Tone 4 Troparion (St Nicholas)

You appeared to your flock as a rule of faith,
an image of humility, and a teacher of
abstinence.
Because of your lowliness heaven was opened to
you!
Because of your poverty riches were granted to
you!
O holy Bishop Nicholas,
pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

Tone 3 Kontakion (Resurrection)

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O
Merciful One,
leading us from the gates of death.
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;
with the Prophets and Patriarchs//
they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of
Thy power.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Tone 2 1st Kontakion (Forefeast)

O Christ, in Thy compassion and infinite mercy,
Thou art coming as a man to be baptized in the
Jordan,
in order to take away the many transgressions
of us all,
clothing me in the garment of ancient glory//
of which I was cruelly stripped bare.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 4 2nd Kontakion (Forefeast)

Today the Lord enters the Jordan and cries out
to John:
“Do not be afraid to baptize Me.//
For I have come to save Adam, the first-formed
man.”

Tone 6 Prokeimenon (Sunday Before)

O Lord, save Thy people, / and bless Thine
inheritance! (*Ps. 27:9a*)

Epistle 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Sunday Before)

But you be watchful in all things, endure
afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill
your ministry.

For I am already being poured out as a drink
offering, and the time of my departure is at
hand. I have fought the good fight, I have
finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally,
there is laid up for me the crown of
righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me
only but also to all who have loved His
appearing.

Gospel Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday Before)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the
Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets:

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,

Who will prepare Your way before You.”
“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
Make His paths straight.’ ”

John came baptizing in the wilderness and
preaching a baptism of repentance for the
remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and
those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were
all baptized by him in the Jordan River,
confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and
with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate
locusts and wild honey. And he preached,
saying, “There comes One after me who is
mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not
worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed
baptized you with water, but He will baptize you
with the Holy Spirit.”

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in
the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*) Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia!

Two Theophanies

We shall now say something about the present
feast. Many celebrate the feastdays and know
their designations, but the cause for which they
were established they know not. Thus
concerning this, that the present feast is called
Theophany -- everyone knows; but what this is -
- Theophany, and whether it be one thing or
another, they know not. And this is shameful --
every year to celebrate the feastday and not
know its reason.

First of all therefore, it is necessary to say that
there is not one Theophany, but two: the one
actual, which already has occurred, and the
second in future, which will happen with glory
at the end of the world. About this one and
about the other you will hear today from Paul,

who in conversing with Titus, speaks thus about
the present: "The grace of God hath revealed
itself, having saved all mankind, decreeing, that
we reject iniquity and worldly desires, and
dwell in the present age in prudence and in
righteousness and piety" -- and about the
future: "awaiting the blessed hope and glorious
appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus
Christ" (Tit 2:11-13). And a prophet speaks thus
about this latter: "the sun shalt turn to
darkness, and the moon to blood at first, then
shalt come the great and illuminating Day of the
Lord" (Joel 2:31).

Why is not that day, on which the Lord was
born, considered Theophany -- but rather this
day on which He was baptised? This present day
it is, on which He was baptised and sanctified
the nature of water. Because on this day all,
having obtained the waters, do carry it home
and keep it all year, since today the waters are
sanctified; and an obvious phenomenon occurs:
these waters in their essence do not spoil with
the passage of time, but obtained today, for one
whole year and often for two or three years,
they remain unharmed and fresh, and
afterwards for a long time do not stop being
water, just as that obtained from the fountains.

Why then is this day called Theophany? Because
Christ made Himself known to all -- not then
when He was born -- but then when He was
baptised. Until this time He was not known to
the people. And that the people did not know
Him, Who He was, listen about this to John the
Baptist, who says: "Amidst you standeth, Him
Whom ye know not of" (Jn.1:26). And is it
surprising that others did not know Him, when
even the Baptist did not know Him until that
day? "And I -- said he -- knew Him not: but He
that did send me to baptise with water, about
This One did tell unto me: over Him that shalt
see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him,
This One it is Who baptiseth in the Holy Spirit"
(Jn. 1:33). (*Chrysostom*)