



Welcome!

Whether you are searching for a new church home or just visiting, we are 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 fill out a visitor's card and drop it in the offering basket as your offering today. We want to get to know you! God bless you!

This Week

Saturday, January 2

10:00 am Divine Liturgy

5:00 pm Great Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

Sunday, January 3

10:00 am Divine Liturgy/Church School

Tuesday, January 5

9:00 am Daily Matins

9:30 am-12:00 pm Office Hours

7:00 pm Vigil of Theophany

Wednesday, January 6: Theophany

9:30 am Festal Liturgy with Water Blessing

Thursday, January 7

9:00 am Daily Matins

9:30 am-12:00 pm Office Hours

Saturday, January 9

10 am Divine Liturgy

5:00 pm Great Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

Sunday, January 10

10:00 am Divine Liturgy/Church School

DATES TO NOTE

Orthodox Great Lent Begins Monday, March 15

Western Easter is on Sunday, April 4

Orthodox Pascha is on Sunday, May 2

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, *Rector*
Deacon Luke Loboda, *Attached*

Saturday/Sunday Before Theophany

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org

January 2-3, 2021

Announcements

➤ This Wednesday is the **Great Feast of Theophany**, the Baptism of Christ. On this day we bless water. You are encouraged to bring a clean container suitable for holy water to take home on that day.

➤ **The St. Nicholas Food Pantry needs your donations!** Our monthly food pantry will be open to the community on the last Saturday of each month from 4-5 pm. Saturday, January 30th, 2020 will be the first day. Please help support this parish ministry and our local community by bringing non-perishable donations to stock our pantry. All donations can be placed in the donation box by the back door of the church basement. Please contact Mat, Ashley or Kate Skowron for additional information. May God bless you for your generosity!

➤ Those who **wish to have their home blessed** during the Theophany season should contact Fr Thomas directly at frthomas@orthodoxpittsburgh.org. However, for those who do not wish to have their home blessed during the pandemic, Fr Thomas will also make arrangements to do home blessings when the pandemic has ended.

➤ In response to the rising COVID-19 cases, His Eminence Archbishop Melchisedek has directed that **masks be worn by everyone** during all services, meetings, and activities on church property, until further notice.

Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized:* (none) *Home:* Aaron Pease, Geroge Shaytar, Sandi Tirpak, Paul Yewisiak, *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Garnette Kerchum, Eleanor Kovacs, Natalie Popovich, Olga Tryszyn.

➤ **Vigil Lights** from the **John Mahalchak family** for departed friends and family, especially grandfather Dmitri; for the health of friends and family, especially John, Cheryl, Gregory, Mary, Daniel, Kayla, Kevin, and Steven. From **Charles Wasilko** for departed parents; for the health of sisters Doris and Marsha. From **Doris Wasilko** for the departed members of the Wasilko and Dyczko families; for the health of the Wasilko family. From **Mat Nancy and Gregory Mell** for the departed servants Christina Saban and Dn Joseph Mell; for the health of family, especially healing prayers for (sister) Phyllis. From **Doris Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family. From **Marsha Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family. From **John Kowalcheck and Olga Cozza** for the health of Matthew Heuer on his birthday. From the **Yurkowski family** for the departed servant Nicholas Yurkowski -- Memory Eternal!



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.

This Week in Church School

Today's lesson: Moses

Scripture reference: Exodus and Numbers

Questions to ask/review:

- Who was Moses? Why did his mother put him in a river in a basket? What do we know about his youth?
- How did God call Moses to serve him?
- What happened at the burning bush? Who is like the burning bush?
- How did Pharaoh treat Israel? Why?
- Name as many of the plagues as you can. How would each have affected the people?
- God asked Moses to do something very difficult. Has God ever asked you to do anything you felt was very hard?
- Who was Aaron? What role did God assign for him?
- Moses was afraid to go to Pharaoh. How does fear affect our ability to trust God? How can we overcome our fear? How did Moses?
- What was the last plague? What did God command the Israelites to do? What is the meaning of this for us Christians?
- What happened at the Red Sea?
- What struggles did Israel face in the wilderness? Can you give examples?
- How did God reveal his 10 commandments to Moses? What happened when Moses brought them to the people?
- What is the role of the Law? What is the importance of rules in our lives? How can laws be made more hurtful than helpful?
- When Israel finally reaches the promised land (Canaan), why can't Moses go?

Suggested Activities at home:

- Practice learning the 10 commandments and memorizing them.
- Make paper baskets or build pyramids with blocks.
- Create a poster that illustrates each of the plagues.

Prayer: Lord, speak to us as You did to Moses. OR Lord, help us to obey You and not to be stubborn like Pharaoh. OR Lord, give me understanding, that I may learn commandments.

Hymns and Readings for Saturday, Jan 2

Tone 4 Troparion (*Forefeast*)

Prepare, O Zebulon,
and adorn thyself, O Naphtali!
River Jordan, cease flowing,
and receive with joy the Master coming to be
baptized!
Adam, rejoice with our first Mother,
and do not hide yourselves as you did of old in
Paradise;
for having seen you naked,
He has appeared to clothe you with the first
garment.//
Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages Amen.

Tone 4 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 8 Prokeimenon of *Saturday* (Psalm 31/32)

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O ye righteous.

Epistle of the *Saturday Before* (1 Tim 3:14-4:5)

These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Gospel of the *Saturday Before* (Matthew 3:1-11)

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
Make His paths straight.’ ”

Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance,

but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Communion Hymn of *Saturday*

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous. Praise befits the just. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! (Ps 33:1)

Significance of Christ’s Baptism

After arriving at thirty years of age, our Lord wanted to manifest Himself to people that He was God in body. When the Lord was baptized by John, God the Father testified from above with His voice and the occurrence of the Holy Spirit, that He was His Son truly and consubstantially. From that moment He became known to all through His miracles, and His lofty teachings, that He was indeed God, Who through the Prophets was clearly proclaimed.*

He came to Baptism for this cause. When the Lord became man on our behalf, He fulfilled the law throughout His entire life. Because John came from the desert and was baptizing at the Jordan, according to the word of God spoken to him, that is according to the ordinance and the law of God, as the Evangelist Luke says (Lk. 3:2), our Lord wanted to fulfill this word as a divine law. This took place after He had reached thirty years of age, when He went to be baptized by John the Baptist, as others were doing, though He had no need to be baptized, being without sin. John, being reverent towards the Lord and aware of his own unworthiness, said: "I have need to be baptized by You, but You come to me?" But the Lord encouraged and urged John to baptize Him, showing him that what he thought was unfitting, was indeed fitting, namely that the Master should be baptized by the servant. For this reason He said to him: "Let it be so. It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way." Righteousness is here called by the Lord the fulfillment of all the

commandments, according to the divine Chrysostom (Discourse on Baptism), as if He said: "Since I fulfilled all the commandments of the divine law, this one alone remained, which is why I must fulfill this one also."

Then John let go of his resistance, and the Lord was baptized by him, and immediately came up out of the water.** And behold the heavens opened, and John saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming to Jesus. And a voice came from the heavens saying: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." By this was manifested to the Jews, that John was not greater than Christ, as it was falsely assumed by many about him. Rather he was incomparably much lower than Christ, being His servant and subject. For this reason the Spirit descended, bringing down the voice of the Father to Jesus, and He clearly showed as if with a finger, that "This is My beloved Son" was not spoken about John the Baptist, although he possessed great glory and office, but it was spoken about the baptized Jesus.

Having therefore fulfilled this lawful ordinance of baptism, the Lord loosed the curse which was given to Adam for deviating from the divine law. And redeeming us from condemnation, he ceased every lawful ritual, and raised it to be more spiritual and more perfect. This was followed by putting an end to Jewish baptism, and gave us the faithful over to be baptized in the three emersions and immersions which take place in the Baptism which has the grace of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of John being inferior.*** By the Lord being baptized in the one river, He fulfilled the shadowy and imperfect baptism, and opened the doors to the spiritual and divine Baptism of the Church. Having in this way been baptized, we owe it to keep ourselves clean, spotless and undefiled from sins, by occupying ourselves with the life-giving commandments.

Hymns and Readings for Sunday, Jan 3

Tone 5 Troparion (*Resurrection*)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead// by His glorious Resurrection.

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 4 Troparion (*Forefeast*)

Prepare, O Zebulon, and adorn thyself, O Naphthali! River Jordan, cease flowing, and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized! Adam, rejoice with our first Mother, and do not hide yourselves as you did of old in Paradise; for having seen you naked, He has appeared to clothe you with the first garment// Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

Tone 5 Kontakion (*Resurrection*)

Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death.

Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of man,// and we cry to Thee: “O Lord, save us!”

Tone 4 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 of the Sunday Before (2 Timothy 4:5-8)

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 of the Sunday Before (Mark 1:1-8)

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 of Sunday

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

On the Baptism of Christ

Christ, then, was born as it were a few days ago — He Whose generation was before all things, sensible and intellectual. Today He is baptized by John that He might cleanse him who was defiled, that He might bring the Spirit from above, and exalt man to heaven, that he who had fallen might be raised up and he who had cast him down might be put to shame. And marvel not if God showed so great earnestness in our cause: for it was with care on the part of him who did us wrong that the plot was laid against us; it is with forethought on the part of our Maker that we are saved. And he, that evil charmer, framing his new device of sin against our race, drew along his serpent train, a disguise worthy of his own intent, entering in his impurity into what was like himself — dwelling, earthly and mundane as he was in will, in that creeping thing. But Christ, the repairer of his evil-doing, assumes manhood in its fullness, and saves man, and becomes the type and figure of us all, to sanctify the first-fruits of every action, and leave to His servants no doubt in their zeal for the tradition. Baptism, then, is a purification from sins, a remission of trespasses, a cause of renovation and regeneration. By regeneration, understand

regeneration conceived in thought, not discerned by bodily sight. For we shall not, according to the Jew Nicodemus and his somewhat dull intelligence, change the old man into a child, nor shall we form anew him who is wrinkled and gray-headed to tenderness and youth, if we bring back the man again into his mother’s womb: but we do bring back, by royal grace, him who bears the scars of sin, and has grown old in evil habits, to the innocence of the babe. For as the child new-born is free from accusations and from penalties, so too the child of regeneration has nothing for which to answer, being released by royal bounty from accountability. And this gift it is not the water that bestows (for in that case it were a thing more exalted than all creation), but the command of God, and the visitation of the Spirit that comes sacramentally to set us free. But water serves to express the cleansing. For since we are wont by washing in water to render our body clean when it is soiled by dirt or mud, we therefore apply it also in the sacramental action, and display the spiritual brightness by that which is subject to our senses. Let us however, if it seems well, persevere in enquiring more fully and more minutely concerning Baptism, starting, as from the fountain-head, from the Scriptural declaration, Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Why are both named, and why is not the Spirit alone accounted sufficient for the completion of Baptism? Man, as we know full well, is compound, not simple: and therefore the cognate and similar medicines are assigned for healing to him who is twofold and conglomerate:— for his visible body, water, the sensible element — for his soul, which we cannot see, the Spirit invisible, invoked by faith, present unspeakably. For the Spirit breathes where He wills, and you hear His voice, but cannot tell whence He comes or whither He goes. He blesses the body that is baptized, and the water that baptizes. Despise not, therefore, the Divine laver, nor think lightly of it, as a common thing, on account of the use of water. For the power that operates is mighty, and wonderful are the things that are wrought thereby. (*St Gregory of Nyssa, c 375 AD*)