

*Hymns for Theophany  
to add to Daily Prayers this Week*

**Troparion Tone 1**

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 Tone 4**

Today Thou hast shone forth to the world, O Lord, and the light of Thy countenance has been marked on us. Knowing Thee, we sing Thy praises: “Thou hast come and revealed Thyself,// O unapproachable Light.”

**Verse at the Blessing of Water**

To the voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord,” You came, O Lord, taking the form of servant. You asked to be baptized though You have no knowledge of sin. The waters saw You and were afraid. The Forerunner trembled and cried aloud: “How will the Lamp illumine the Light? How will a servant lay his hand on the Master? You take away the sin of the world, O Savior.// Sanctify both me and the waters!”

*“Let us Attend! ”*



*“Christ has appeared in the Jordan to sanctify the waters...”*

A PARISH BULLETIN OF  
ALL SAINTS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Olyphant, Pennsylvania

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5 January 2025

**Eve of Theophany**

## Bulletin, Sunday, 5 January 2025

28th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 3. Eve of Theophany. Sunday before Theophany. Hieromartyr Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia, and Martyr Theonas (303). Venerable Synkletika of Alexandria (ca. 350). Prophet Micah (9th c. BC). Saint Apollinaria of Egypt (ca. 470). Ven. Phosterius the Hermit (9th c.). Ven. Menas of Sinai (6th c.). Ven. Gregory of Crete (ca. 820). Ven. Romanos, Martyr (1694).

**Epistle:** *2 Timothy 4:5-8*; **Gospel:** *Mark 1:1-8*

*Our souls and minds are strengthened and fortified by the regular reading of the Holy Scriptures. Daily readings can be found on the parish's wall calendar, or online by visiting the OCA's daily reading page <https://www.oca.org/readings>.*

### **Weekly Schedule:**

- Today following Coffee Hour: Great Compline and Great Blessing of Water. Fr. Paul begins to bless homes.
- Monday 6 January 2024, 9:30AM Festal Divine Liturgy for the Great Feast of Holy Theophany. Blessing of Homes
- Wednesday, 9AM Akathist to St. John the Baptist.
- Saturday, 11 January 2024: 5:30PM Panikhida for +Lovey Huddy; 6:00PM Great Vespers.

– Sunday, 12 January 2024. Sunday After Theophany; 9:30AM Divine Liturgy, followed by Coffee Hour Agape Fellowship.

~ Our congratulations to Marie Takach on being received into the ranks of the Catechumenate. May the Lord bless your journey towards reception into the Holy Orthodox Church.

~ Please look forward to a call from Father Paul requesting a convenient time to bless your home.

### **Preparing for a House Blessing**

In anticipation of the arrival of the Fr. Paul to your house, a table should be prepared by being covered with a white cloth. On the table should be placed a lighted candle in a candle holder, an icon, a small bowl containing Holy Water taken by the family from the Church at the Great Blessing of Waters, along with a clearly printed list of the names of the living and departed members of your household.

Lights should be turned on in all the rooms of the house that are to be blessed, and all electronic devices should be turned off. Ideally, the entire family that resides in a home gather before the dining table to begin the Theophany house blessing. If it is your custom to give a freewill offering during the blessings of homes, please know that all contributions will be collected and used for helping those in need within our parish and in the local community.

SATURDAY

Saturday before Theophany  
Fast-free

1 Timothy 3:13-4:5; Matthew 3:1-6

# JANUARY 4

*Miracles happen through the prayers of small children.*

*St. Paisios the Athonite*

**NEW VENERABLE MARTYR ONUPHRIUS OF GABROVO.** Onuphrius was born into a wealthy Christian family, and his father later became a monk. One day, his parents punished him for some mischief, and in the presence of the Hagarenes, Onuphrius defiantly said that he would join their religion. Later, when he came of age, he went to live on Mt. Athos at the Hilander Monastery, hoping that the ascetical life would gain him Christ's forgiveness. However, his denial of Christ greatly troubled him, and he developed a great desire for martyrdom. He became inspired by New Martyrs Euthymius, Ignatius, and Acacius and went to Elder Nicephorus, who had prepared them for martyrdom. For four months, Onuphrius was prepared through extensive fasting, vigils, prostrations, and unceasing prayer. Then, he traveled to Chios with monk Gregory, who had accompanied the other three martyrs. In a dream, Onuphrius saw a group of priests and bishops who told him to go and see Jesus Who said that a place was made ready for him. Onuphrius awoke overjoyed. After more fasting and prayer, he cut his hair and beard and dressed as a Hagarene with a turban. On the way to the courthouse, he gave alms to the sick and persisted until he saw the judge. Onuphrius confessed his Christian faith, threw the turban to the floor, and rebuked Islam. He was chained in prison and tortured. At the age of thirty-two, St. Onuphrius was beheaded, and his relics were cast into the sea.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Synaxis of the 70 Apostles; Eustathius I of Serbia; 13 Syrian Fathers of Georgia; Gregory of Langres; Theoctistus of Cucomo; Euthymios of Thessalonica; Zosimas the Hermit and Athanasios the Commentarius; Aquila of the Kiev Caves; Euthymios and 12 monks of Vatopedi; Dafrosa of Rome; Symeon of Smolensk; Holy 6 Martyrs; Apollinaria of Egypt; Chrysanthos and Euphemia in Constantinople; Timothy of Kakhshata; Nikephoros the Leper; Onuphrius of Gabrovo; Mark of Sergievsk; Ethiopian eunuch of Queen Candace.

SUNDAY

Sunday before Theophany  
Abstain from meat and  
dairy products, and fish.

2 Timothy 4:5-8; Mark 1:1-8

# JANUARY 5

*For what purpose does the Lord add day after day, year after year, to our existence? In order that we may gradually put away, cast aside, evil from our souls, each one his own, and acquire blessed simplicity; in order that we may become truly gentle; in order that we may learn not to have the least attachment to earthly things, but as loving and simple children may cling with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our thoughts, to God alone, and so to love Him, and our neighbor as ourselves. Let us therefore hasten to pray to the Lord, fervently and with tears, to grant us simplicity of heart, and let us strive by every means to cast out the evil from our souls.*

*St. John of Kronstadt*

**VENERABLE GREGORY OF AKRITA.** Gregory was born in eighth-century Crete and was taught the Orthodox faith by his parents. However, the iconoclasts who wanted to destroy the icons, were persecuting the Church, so Gregory fled to Seleucia to practice his religion. Later, when he was twenty years old, he moved to Jerusalem for twelve years, but again, he endured persecution, this time from the Jews. Finally, Gregory entered the monastic life in Rome under the tutelage of Michael the Confessor, Bishop of Synnada. Later, they traveled to another monastery at the cape of Akrita, where Gregory accomplished his great asceticism. St. Gregory died peacefully at the age of sixty.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Syncretike of Alexandria; Phosterios and Menas of Sinai; Gregory at Akrita; Martyr Sais; Theopemptos of Nicomedia and Theonas; Martyr Theocidos; Righteous Domnina; Righteous Tatiana; Romanos of Carpenision; Talida of Antioe, and Taora; Theophan of the Rykhlovsk; Symeon of the Pskov Caves; Niphon, Bishop of Cyprus; Cera (Kiara) of Ireland; Andrew Zimin, his wife Lydia, their three daughters, and Domnica, of Russia.

MONDAY

Holy Theophany  
Fast-free

JANUARY 6

Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; Matthew 3:13-17

When John the Baptist witnessed and said about Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29), and when John immersed and baptized the Lord in the Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation was shown. That is to say: The Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them (immersion) and became alive again (the coming out of the water); and we must die as the old sinful man and become alive again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation.

*St. Nikolai Velimirovich*

**REPOSE OF ST. THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE.** Theophan died in 1884 on the feast of Theophany, for which his monastic name was given. Upon his death, the brethren dressed him in his hierarchical vestments, and eyewitnesses said a smile clearly shone on his face. For six days, the faithful viewed his unembalmed relic without showing any corruption, and he appeared as one calmly sleeping. Even before Theophan was canonized, his photograph was often seen in peasant's homes next to the icon of St. Seraphim of Sarov. Healings of eye disease and melancholy occurred at Theophan's grave. An abbess who had received his advice during his lifetime continued to receive his help in difficult situations after his death. The bishop of Kozlov told the faithful to continue to entreat Theophan's intercessions and to "imitate him as far as our weakness will allow." St. Theophan's monastery was destroyed after the Russian Revolution in 1923, but even then, the oil lamps would sometimes light themselves in the ruined church.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Holy Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; Romanus of Lacedemonia, at Constantinople; Laurence of Chernigov; Melaine (Melanias), Bishop of Remes; Repose of St. Theophan the Recluse.

TUESDAY

Synaxis of St. John the Baptist  
Fast-free

JANUARY 7

Acts 19:1-8; John 1:29

What does the daily invocation of the Saints signify—of different ones each day, during the whole year, and during our whole life? It signifies that God's Saints—as our brethren, but perfect—live, and are near us—ever ready to help us by the Grace of God. We live together with them in the house of our Heavenly Father, only in different parts of it. We live in the earthly, they in the Heavenly half; but we can converse with them and they with us. God's Saints are near to the believing heart and are ready in a moment to help those who call upon them with faith and love.

*St. John of Kronstadt*

**ST. KENTIGERNA, HERMITESS OF LOCH LOMOND.** Kentigerna was from a royal family in seventh- and eighth-century Ireland. She married a chieftain named Feredach, and they raised many holy children, including St. Fillan. Kentigerna devoted her life to bringing up her children in holy ways. She cultivated a special devotion to the Mother of God and her Guardian Angel and taught her children the importance of such devotions. When her husband died, she moved to Scotland and founded a retreat on an island in Loch Lomond. She practiced devout prayer and contemplation, and many holy women joined her. St. Kentigerna worked many miracles and is commemorated widely in Scotland.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Synaxis of St. John the Forerunner; Miracle of St. John the Baptist in Chios; Translation of the right hand of St. John the Baptist; Athanasios of Attaleia and Smyrna; Cedd, Bishop of Lavingham; Brannock (Brynach) of Braunton (England); Kentigerna of Loch Lomond; Paphnutius (Kostin) of Optina Monastery; Nicholas (Parfenov), Bishop of Atkarsk; Julian and Julias of Aegina; Repose of St. Ieronymos of Simonopetra.

## *The Best Basis for Our Priorities*

The Apostle Paul taught in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the Church is the “pillar and ground of the truth,” and it is to this Church that the Apostles entrusted the Faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) as its guardian and protector. Thus, the Church’s services, liturgies, prayers, and sacraments are all essential if we are to be authentic as people of faith.

St. Athanasius the Great said, “In accordance with the apostolic faith delivered to us by tradition from the Fathers, I have delivered the tradition, without inventing anything extraneous to it. What I have learned, that I inscribed, conformably with the Holy Scriptures.”

It is through this Tradition that we bind ourselves to Christ, serving only Him. All else must be secondary. When the Lord says, “You cannot serve God and mammon,” He is referring to things of a material nature (Matt. 6:24; *mammon* is the Aramaic word for “god of wealth”). He asks us all to declare whom we serve: God or mammon? And the way to determine whom or what you love the most is to see where your loyalties lie. When you face a choice between God and anything else, what is your choice? Do you choose to attend church on Sunday, or do you choose to sleep in? Do you prioritize your life around your relationship with God, or do sporting events, vacations, family outings, entertainment, or friends take center stage? Do prayer, reading the Bible, serving others, financially supporting the Church and its mission, and giving alms serve as your central theme, or do you choose personal gain and pleasure as central to your life?

## *Political versus Spiritual Authority*

Priest, bishops, and others who serve the Church are often tempted to think their parishioners should adhere to their political ideals. This temptation can lead to the alienation of some members of their flock, especially the young.

Our society has seen great changes, and the moral and spiritual authority of the Church cannot be compromised by attempts on the part of her clergy to enforce a political litmus test on her faithful. There is room within the Orthodox Church for a great many political views, and it is best that the clergy help the faithful find their way by sticking to the preaching of the Gospels. This allows the message of the Gospels to work transformation within the heart and conscience of each believer.

The Church can never be about membership in one political party, nor can Orthodox Christians be expected to put aside views that differ from that of the Church. Being a thinking person does not disqualify anyone from membership in Christ’s Body. The healing that comes within the sacramental life of the Church is for everyone, and each of us falls short of the ideals that flow out of the gospel message. Forcing anyone to cast aside opinions can actually drive a person from the very arena where healing can take place.

No one political party or human philosophy is flawless. Truth can be found in many places, and the Church, if she is true to her calling, should be the guiding light for each of us, regardless of our political allegiances. His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, in an address to the Holy Synod of Bishops, said, “The Church must have no political means of exercising an influence on those in authority. The Church ‘loses public confidence’ if it becomes a political player. The Church only has one way to influence the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, the educated and the simpleninded—to preach God’s word.”

Let us not, in our zeal for upholding the truth, become a stumbling block for those who have not yet been fully integrated into Christ’s Church.

## *The Saints: Our Living Helpers and Friends*

According to St. Symeon the New Theologian, vigil lights are placed before the icons of the saints as a way of showing that without the Light, who is Christ, the saints are nothing. It is only as the Light of Christ shines on them that they become alive and resplendent.

The saints show us what a glorious destiny we have in God. Through the example of their lives, they point the way to our becoming “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). The saints, as the cloud of witnesses in heaven, are present in the divine services, worshipping the Holy Trinity with us. They, as our friends, intercede before the throne of God on our behalf, having won the good fight, and we are encouraged by the memory and example of their lives as we struggle on our own path to God.

It has been said that there are two kinds of people in the world: sinners who think they are saints, and saints who know they are sinners. Saints are Christians who let God’s light shine through them and whose lives have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We venerate the saints as we seek their intercession with God, but we adore and worship only God in Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We venerate the images (icons) as well as the relics of the saints and martyrs. Yet, according to the decisions and canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, this veneration relates not to the icons as such, but to their prototypes—to the persons they represent.

The interior walls of our temples are adorned with icons of the saints as a reminder that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses—the saints—and that the Church Militant (here on earth) is not separated from the Church Triumphant (in heaven). In Christ, death does not divide us, for the saints are not dead, but alive in Christ Jesus.

Glory to Jesus Christ, who is glorified in His saints.

## *Godly Friends and Spiritual Progress*

It is easy to feel trapped by our bad habits. Growing as Christians is often fraught with failure, and we find ourselves stuck. Our spiritual progress feels more like a treadmill; we are seemingly moving forward, but the scenery remains the same.

If we have friendships that keep us from growing, perhaps it is time to leave those friendships behind. Back in the 1960s, I often hung around with a group of friends at a coffeehouse in Berkeley, California. We’d talk about the books we were going to write—but all we did was talk. One young man shocked the rest of us one day when he announced he was no longer going to come to the coffeehouse. He’d decided it was a waste of time. He told us he wanted to go to medical school and was therefore planning to put all his energy into completing his college degree with the best grades he could possibly get. We all tried to convince him that he could accomplish all that without abandoning the coffeehouse scene. But that was the last evening he’d ever join us.

His decision haunted me, for deep down I knew he was right. I was feeling increasingly unfulfilled, both spiritually and intellectually. Within six months I made the decision to move to Portland, Oregon, for a fresh start.

For us as Christians, it does make a difference whom we hang out with. If you have friendships with individuals who are simply not interested in things of a spiritual nature, you will find yourself wasting precious moments in your journey to God. Having friendships with fellow Christians is the only way we can keep ourselves centered in Christ. Build a stronger relationship with Christ by spending time with people whose values are the same.

If you waste your time with people who are only pursuing worldly pleasures, you’ll end your life doing the same. The time God has allotted us must not be squandered.

## HOMILY

— on the citizens of the other world.

*"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn. 17:16).*

Christ the Lord is not of this world, but He clothes Himself with this world — a leader clad in the garment of a slave — to save the slave ensnared by sin, matter and the devil. As the Leader is, so are His troops. They in their souls are not of this world. They are not slaves but free men, not servants but masters, creatures not of corruption but of eternity, not unto perdition but unto salvation. Such are those whom Christ recruited and who, having tasted of eternal life, voluntarily set themselves free from the world and joined themselves to Him, remaining faithful to Him to the end of their earthly lives. Abba Moses said: "No-one can enrol in Christ's army unless he be all of flame, scorning honour and repose, leaving aside all bodily desires and keeping the commandments of God." Judas was among those recruited, but he fell back and preferred prison to the courts of the King, slavery to freedom, corruption to immortality and perdition to salvation. But the other recruited apostles, the greater and the lesser, remained faithful to the end and wrought the victory, for which they are renowned on earth among men and in heaven among the angels. For this they are glorified and blessed on earth and in heaven. All that the world praises perishes with the world, but that which Christ praises is saved by Him. The praise of the world is death, but the praise of Christ is life, eternal and deathless.

O immortal Lord, though we too, through the flesh and sin, are of this world, enrol us in Thine army, which, by Thy Spirit, power, wisdom and love, is not of this world. Grant that when we die in this world we may live in Thine immortal Kingdom with the angels, the apostles and the saints, through the love and prayers of Thine apostles. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

## JANUARY 5th

**1. The Hieromartyr Theopemptus and the Holy Martyr Theonas.**  
When the Emperor Diocletian gave orders for the persecution of Christians, Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia, was the first to suffer for Christ. He was brought before the Emperor, who threatened him with death if he did not deny Christ. To that threat, the courageous bishop replied: 'It is written: "Fear not those who are able to kill the soul". You, O King, have power over my body. Do with it whatever you will!' He was cruelly beaten and starved, and tortured in many ways. Finally the Emperor called in a magician, Theonas, to trick the man of God in some way with magic. Theonas dissolved a very strong poison in water and gave it to Theopemptus to drink. Theopemptus made the sign of the Cross over the cup and drank the poison. Theonas, seeing that it had no effect on Theopemptus, turned to the Emperor and cried out: 'I too am a Christian, and worship the Crucified!' They were both condemned to death; Theopemptus was slain with the sword and Theonas buried alive in the year 298. They suffered with honour and became citizens of the Kingdom of Christ.

**2. The Holy Prophet Micah the First (or Micaiah).**

Micah was a contemporary of the Prophet Elias (9th century B.C.), and prophesied evil to King Ahab, who was killed in battle against the Syrians (I Kings 22:8; II Chron. 18:7). He prophesied entirely orally, writing nothing down. There was another Micah, in the eighth century, who prophesied the birth of the Lord in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2) and wrote one of the prophetic books.

**3. Our Holy Mother Syncletica.**

A native of Macedonia and educated in Alexandria, she was a rich young woman of standing. She had many suitors, but refused them all and fled from her parents' home to a monastery. In the greatest self-denial, in vigils and prayer, she lived to the age of eighty. Her counsels to the nuns have always been regarded as true spiritual pearls, the wisdom she attained coming not from reading but

through suffering and pain, through constant meditation and spiritual converse with the divine world. Her soul entered into that higher world in the year 350. Among other counsels, St Syncletica taught: 'Do not abandon a fast in time of sickness, for lo, those who do not fast fall into the same sicknesses.' Also: 'Treasure, when discovered, is quickly seized upon; so virtue, when it is made public, is quickly eclipsed and lost.'

#### 4. Our Holy Mother Apollinaria.

She was the elder daughter of Anthemius, the regent during the minority of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, his second-born daughter being insane. She refused to marry, being in her heart betrothed to Christ. Going off into the Egyptian desert, wearing man's dress and using the man's name Dorotheus, she entered a men's monastery where she lived in asceticism, lifting up her soul constantly to God and burning with love towards His whole creation.

It was suggested to Anthemius the Regent that he send his remaining, insane, daughter to the hermit, that prayers might be read over her. And so, by the providence of God, it came to pass that Apollinaria healed her insane sister by the power of prayer.

As soon as she died, the secret became known — that she had been a woman, not a man. The manly courage of this holy virgin has remained as an example and stimulus throughout the ages to all who take thought for their salvation. She entered into rest in the year 470.

#### FOR CONSIDERATION

It is fruit, fruit and fruit alone that the Lord seeks from man, that living tree. Good fruit is a God-loving heart, but bad fruit is a heart filled with self-love. All other things that a man has and enjoys — status, power, honour, health, wealth, learning — these are no more than the leaves of the tree. "*Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire*" (Matt. 3:10). Even non-Christian peoples rate good works above fine words. So much the more must it be the rule among the followers of Christ. At a certain gathering of Athenians, at which envoys from Sparta were pre-

sent, one old man was going from bench to bench, trying to find somewhere to sit down. The Athenians mocked at him, and no-one gave him his seat. When the old man drew near to the Spartans, they all leapt to their feet and offered him their places. Seeing this, the Athenians expressed their gratitude to the Spartans in well-rounded phrases. To this the Spartans replied: 'The Athenians know what is good, but do not do it.' He who does good is like a tree that bears good fruit for its owner. And the well-spring of goodness in man is a good, God-loving heart.

#### TO PONDER

Let me ponder on the perfection of the first man, Adam, on:

1. His closeness to God.
2. His God-given strength, wisdom and beauty.
3. The voluntary submission of all natural powers to the sinless Adam.

#### HOMILY

- on our helplessness without Christ the Lord.

*"Without Me ye can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:5).

Our Lord is not in the habit of exaggerating in His speech. There are no words in this world that are more carefully weighed than His. So when He says that we can, without Him, do nothing, He quite literally means just that. He speaks here of good, not of evil; we can do no sort of good without Christ, dissociated from Christ or contrary to Christ. He is the owner, giver and inspirer of each and every thing that is good. There is no sort of good that remains outside Him, and there is no sort of evil that dwells within Him. 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches', He said. What can the branches do without the vine? Can they grow and bear fruit? They are good for nothing but firewood.

Man may apply himself endlessly to thought, but he can never imagine one single, real good that is not in Christ and which does not spring from Christ. If anyone claims to perform good and humane