



St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church
Weekly Newsletter
Sunday, January 10, 2021

2021 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2021 are now available in the narthex for pickup. If you have already requested a box, you may pick it up while at church for a service, or you can contact the church office at office@saintgeorgeupperdarby.org to coordinate a time to pick it up outside of services. If you do not have a box number assigned to you but would like a box of offering envelopes, please contact the church office.

Upcoming Meetings

- 12 Baskets – Thursday 1/7, 8pm
Contact [Vicki McGraw](#) for more info
- Parish Council – Sunday 1/10, 1pm
Office will send meeting link
- Choir practice - Tuesday 1/19, 7pm
Contact [Matt Gordon](#) for Zoom link

Philly OCF

- Bible study - Tuesday 1/12, 11am
[Zoom link](#)
Mtg ID #880 5713 0161
Password: Scripture
- Regular meetings will resume in January after winter break – check back here for the date

Sunday after Epiphany

Ephesians 4:7-13

Matthew 4:12-17

- The following services will be held in the church and streamed on the [website](#):
 - **Friday 1/8** – Prayer Walk, 6pm
 - **Saturday 1/9** – Vespers, 5pm
 - **Sunday 1/10** – Orthros and Liturgy, 9:30am
 - **Tuesday 1/12** – Matins, 9am
 - **Tuesday 1/12** – Akathist, 7pm (email [Dn. Joseph](#))
- To attend one of the services listed above at the church, please sign up via Sign Up Genius ([January services](#)). When doing so, please keep in mind the following:
 - reserve the number of slots for family members attending (For example, if there are 3 household members attending, reserve 3 slots.)
 - those who are elderly, have pre-existing conditions, or currently are not feeling well are asked to remain home.
 - children who are too young to keep a mask on are asked to remain home.
- To set up a time to receive communion, please sign up via the [Sign Up Genius](#). Please reserve only one slot per household unit. Prior to arriving at the church for communion, please say the [Morning Prayers](#) and the [Prayers of Preparation before Communion](#).
- Confession is also being scheduled by appointment. To set up an appointment, please email the church office and provide a few dates/times you are available. The office will email you to confirm your appointment time.

Troparion of St. George

O liberator and deliverer of captives, helper of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender for kings, O great among Martyrs, the victory-clad George; intercede with Christ our God for the salvation of our souls.

If you attend a service, you must wear a mask/face covering out of care for ourselves, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and our neighbors.

2021 Home Blessings

Due to the current situation and at the urging of Bishop THOMAS (and barring the widespread availability of a vaccine by February), there will be a modified schedule for home blessings in 2021. You may have your home blessed prior to Lent, but it will be a blessing only (no meals, visiting, etc). You may also opt to wait and have your home blessed after Pascha. To sign up for a time to have your home blessed, please complete the form linked here:

<https://forms.gle/Duy8KewHKydZkYjU8>. Thank you for your understanding.



Theophany (January 6)

On January 6, the Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Theophany, the baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the waters of the Jordan. The feast is called Theophany – a "revelation of God" – because the foreshadowing of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament is made manifest. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, descends into the waters, the voice of the Father testifies to His Sonship, and the Holy Spirit confirms the proclamation of the Father through appearing in the likeness of a dove.

There are two important themes that arise from the readings appointed for the Vespers of the feast dealing with water: one is the power God has over the waters and the other is the way God appointed water as a means of purification.

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, the ebbs and flows of the waters were life and death. Flooding was needed to grow their crops, but flooding could also cause destruction. The balance between these two types of flooding meant that the pagan gods of the ancient world needed to show authority over the waters. The first reading from Genesis shows the True God as the One who not only manages flood waters, but Himself

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The 2020-21 Sunday School year curriculum focuses on the 12 Great Feasts of the church. Classes rotate through an activity each week, and everything is done remotely. The schedule for January is listed below. Parents whose children are registered will receive additional information for the upcoming week from the church office by Thursday each week.

January Feast: Theophany (1/6)

January 3

- Elementary school: Ask Abouna
- Middle school: At home resources
- High school: Class (via Zoom)

January 10

- Elementary school: At Home Resources
- Middle school: Class (via Zoom)
- High school: Ask Abouna

January 17

- Elementary school: Class (via Zoom)
- Middle school: Ask Abouna
- High school: At home resources

January 24

Family Ask Abouna

January 31

No Sunday School

"created the heavens and the earth." He separated the land from the waters and marked the boundaries of the seas.

The readings continue to show the mastery God gave His servants over the waters. God had Moses command the Red Sea to be parted, allowing the children of Israel to escape the slavery of Egypt. God instructed Moses to throw a tree of the land of Marah into bitter waters, and the waters were turned sweet. God showed His continued faithfulness by stopping the flow of the Jordan when the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the water, and the children of Israel crossed over with dry feet. Before Elias was parted from Elisha, he struck the Jordan with his mantle so that the two could cross over – again with dry feet.

We also see that God uses water as a means of purification – both from sin and from sickness. Elisha ordered Naaman the Syrian, suffering from leprosy, to immerse himself seven times in the Jordan river to be "made clean." After immersing himself, Naaman's flesh was "restored like the flesh of a child." In the prophecy of Isaiah, the Lord commands: "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil doings from before my eyes." In this case, the purification is not from disease but from evil. The washing is the beginning of repentance – "cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Finally, in the Gospel reading appointed for Vespers, we see the baptism done by the culmination of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist. We hear that he preached a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As crowds came to him, including tax collectors and soldiers, they asked what they should do in response to the cleansing they received in the waters, and St. John preached how they should live their lives in holiness going forward.

These readings set the stage for the glorious mystery that is the Baptism of Our Lord. We learned in the first reading from Genesis that God created all things by His Word, He separated the land from the waters by His Word, and He marked the boundaries of the waters by His Word. Now the very Word of God, who was born in the flesh in the previous feast, descends in the waters to be immersed in the waters. He does not command His servant and prophet, John the Baptist, to strike the waters that He may cross with dry feet, but He commands His servant and prophet to place his hand on His Head *to immerse* Him into those waters! The Jordan, in acknowledgment of the Master, changes course, but the Master nonetheless wills its waters to cover over Him.

We know that the Lord was pure and without sin, yet He deigned to be washed. He suffered no corruption or disease, yet He deigned to be cleansed. With no need, only to "fulfill all righteousness," did the Lord come to His Baptism. And because of the unity of His Divinity and His Humanity, and because of His Divine Humility, the Lord is not cleansed or purified or washed – *the waters themselves become pure, holy, and sanctified by Him!* At this moment, the Father's voice reveals Him as the Son and the Spirit confirms it.

So what is revealed in this Theophany? God's self-revelation as the Holy Trinity came not in great miracles or in displays of mighty power but in the Almighty Son and Word of God bowing His Head in humility and obedience out of His love for the Father and for us. We see that our path to purification and sanctification must also come in imitation of Our Lord. We must learn the way of humility, the way of obedience and the way of love. Only then can we partake of the great grace that God pours out on us during this wondrous feast, where the Church declares:

Today the celestials celebrate with the terrestrials, and the terrestrials commune with the celestials. Today the assembly of noble and great-voiced Orthodox rejoiceth. Today the Master cometh to baptism to elevate mankind above. Today the Unbowable boweth to his servant to deliver us from slavery. Today we have bought the kingdom of heaven, for the kingdom of heaven hath no end. Today the land and the sea have divided between them the joy of the world, and the world hath been filled with rejoicing.