

*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

*Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov. Priest-in-Charge, 323-851-7989, nkhalimonov@yahoo.com
Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:
Saturday, January 6, 13
Great Vespers: 5pm

Saturday, January 6
Sunday, January 7, 14
Divine Liturgy: 10am
Coffee and fellowship
will follow the service

*The above services are
at St. Olympia Church
34 North Main Street
Norwood, NY, 13668*

*Mailing Address
St. Olympia Orthodox
Church PO Box 122
Canton, NY 13617*

The Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ **January 6**



*When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan,
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You,
and called You His beloved Son;
and the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ our God, You have revealed Yourself
and hast enlightened the world, glory to You.*

Troparion of Theophany



Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John **January 7**

*The river Jordan trembled and was driven back filled
with fear at Your coming in the flesh, while John drew
back in awe as he fulfilled the ministry of a prophet.
The ranks of angels stood amazed, when they beheld
You in the flesh being baptized in the streams. And we,
who were in darkness, are filled with light as we
praise You, who have appeared to enlighten all.*

Kontakion

Epiphany

The Orthodox Faith - Volume II: Worship, The Church Year

By Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Epiphany = shining forth or manifestation
Theophany = the shining forth and manifestation of God

The sixth of January is the feast of the Epiphany. Originally it was the one Christian feast of the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. It included the celebration of Christ’s birth, the adoration of the Wisemen, and all of the childhood events of Christ such as His circumcision and presentation to the temple as well as His baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast, like Easter and Pentecost, was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights.

Epiphany means shining forth or manifestation. The feast is often called, as it is in the Orthodox service books, Theophany, which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present day celebration is on the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in the baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus identifies Himself with sinners as the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1.29), the “Beloved” of the Father whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins (Luke 3.21, Mark 1.35). And he is revealed as well as One of the Divine Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and by the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast:

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling 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).

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, and Thy Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise Thee: Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion).

The services of Epiphany are set up exactly as those of Christmas, although historically it was most certainly Christmas which was made to imitate Epiphany since it was established later. Once again the Royal Hours and the Liturgy of Saint Basil are celebrated together with Vespers on the eve of the feast; and the Vigil is made up of Great Compline and Matins.

The prophecies of Epiphany repeat the God is with us from Isaiah and stress the foretelling of the Messiah as well as the coming of His forerunner, John the Baptist:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God
(Isaiah 40.3–5; Luke 3.4–6)

Once more special psalms are sung to begin the Divine Liturgy of the feast, and the baptismal line of Galatians 3.27 replaces the song of the Thrice-Holy. The gospel readings of all the Epiphany services tell of the Lord’s baptism by John in the Jordan River. The epistle reading of the Divine Liturgy tells of the consequences of the Lord’s appearing which is the divine epiphany.

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds
(Titus 2.11–14).

The main feature of the feast of the Epiphany is the Great Blessing of Water. It is prescribed to follow both the Divine Liturgy of the eve of the feast and the Divine Liturgy of the day itself. Usually it is done just once in parish churches at the time when most people can be present. It begins with the singing of special hymns and the censing of the water which has been placed in the center of the church building. Surrounded by candles and flowers, this water stands for the beautiful world of God’s original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes this service of blessing is done out of doors at a place where the water is flowing naturally.

The voice of the Lord cries over the waters, saying: Come all ye, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, even Christ who is made manifest.

Today the nature of water is sanctified. Jordan is divided in two, and turns back the stream of its waters, beholding the Master being baptized.

*As a man Thou didst come to that river, O Christ our King, and dost hasten O Good One, to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner [John], because of our sins, O Lover of Man
(Hymns of the Great Blessing of Waters)*

Following are three readings from the Prophecy of Isaiah concerning the messianic age:

Let the thirsty wilderness be glad, let the desert rejoice, let it blossom as a rose, let it blossom abundantly, let everything rejoice . . . (Isaiah 35.1–10)

Go to that water, O you who thirst, and as many as have no money, let them eat and drink without price, both wine and fat . . . (Isaiah 55.1–13)

With joy draw the water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall you say: Confess ye unto the Lord and call upon his Name; declare his glorious deeds . . . his Name is exalted . . . Hymn the Name of the Lord . . . Rejoice and exult . . . (Isaiah 12.3.6)

After the epistle (1 Corinthians 1.10–14) and the gospel reading (Mark 1.9–11) the special great litany is chanted invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon those who will partake of it. It ends with the great prayer of the cosmic glorification of God in which Christ is called upon to sanctify the water, and all men and all creation, by the manifestation of his saving and sanctifying divine presence by the indwelling of the Holy and Good and Life-creating Spirit.

As the troparion of the feast is sung, the celebrant immerses the Cross into the water three times and then proceeds to sprinkle the water in the four directions of the world. He then blesses the people and their homes with the sanctified water which stands for the salvation of all men and all creation which Christ has effected by his “epiphany” in the flesh for the life of the world.

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 the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in 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*” (Ephesians 3.19), the “*fullness of him who fills all in all*” (Ephesians 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*” (Colossians 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 (Isaiah 66.2; 2 Peter 3.13; Revelation 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*” (Ephesians 3.19).

Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa

January 10

Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, was a younger brother Saint Basil the Great (January 1). His birth and upbringing came at a time when the Arian disputes were at their height. Having received an excellent education, he was at one time a teacher of rhetoric. In the year 372, he was consecrated by Saint Basil the Great as bishop of the city of Nyssa in Cappadocia.

Saint Gregory was an ardent advocate for Orthodoxy, and he fought against the Arian heresy with his brother Saint Basil. Gregory was persecuted by the Arians, by whom he was falsely accused of improper use of church property, and thereby deprived of his See and sent to Ancyra.

In the following year Saint Gregory was again deposed in absentia by a council of Arian bishops, but he continued to encourage his flock in Orthodoxy, wandering about from place to place. After the death of the emperor Valens (378), Saint Gregory was restored to his cathedra and was joyously received by his flock. His brother Saint Basil the Great died in 379.

Only with difficulty did Saint Gregory survive the loss of his brother and guide. He delivered a funeral oration for him, and completed Saint Basil's study of the six days of Creation, the Hexaemeron. That same year Saint Gregory participated in the Council of Antioch against heretics who refused to recognize the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God. Others at the opposite extreme, who worshipped the Mother of God as being God Herself, were also denounced by the Council. He visited the churches of Arabia and Palestine, which were infected with the Arian heresy, to assert the Orthodox teaching about the Most Holy Theotokos. On his return journey Saint Gregory visited Jerusalem and the Holy Places.

In the year 381 Saint Gregory was one of the chief figures of the Second Ecumenical Council, convened at Constantinople against the heresy of Macedonius, who incorrectly taught about the Holy Spirit. At this Council, on the initiative of Saint Gregory, the Nicene Symbol of Faith (the Creed) was completed.

Together with the other bishops Saint Gregory affirmed Saint Gregory the Theologian as Archpastor of Constantinople.

In the year 383, Saint Gregory of Nyssa participated in a Council at Constantinople, where he preached a sermon on the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In 386, he was again at Constantinople, and he was asked to speak the funeral oration in memory of the empress Placilla. Again in 394 Saint Gregory was present in Constantinople at a local Council, convened to resolve church matters in Arabia.

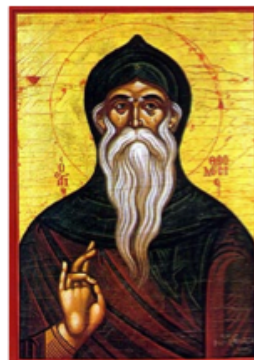
Saint Gregory of Nyssa was a fiery defender of Orthodox dogmas and a zealous teacher of his flock, a kind and compassionate father to his spiritual children, and their intercessor before the courts. He was distinguished by his magnanimity, patience and love of peace.

Having reached old age, Saint Gregory of Nyssa died soon after the Council of Constantinople. Together with his great contemporaries, Saints Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa had a significant influence on the Church life of his time. His sister, Saint Macrina, wrote to him: "You are renowned both in the cities, and gatherings of people, and throughout entire districts. Churches ask you for help." Saint Gregory is known in history as one of the most profound Christian thinkers of the fourth century. Endowed with philosophical talent, he saw philosophy as a means for a deeper penetration into the authentic meaning of divine revelation.

Saint Gregory left behind many remarkable works of dogmatic character, as well as sermons and discourses. He has been called "the Father of Fathers."



Saint Gregory of Nyssa



Venerable Theodosius

Venerable Theodosius the Great, the Cenobiarch

January 11

Saint Theodosius the Great lived during the fifth-sixth centuries, and was the founder of cenobitic monasticism. He was born in Cappadocia of pious parents. Endowed with a splendid voice, he zealously toiled at church reading and singing. Saint Theodosius prayed fervently that the Lord would guide him on the way to salvation. In his early years he visited the Holy Land and met with Saint Simeon the Stylite (September 1), who blessed him and predicted future pastoral service for him.

Yearning for the solitary life, Saint Theodosius settled in Palestine into a desolate cave, in which, according to Tradition, the three Magi had spent the night, having come to worship the Savior after His Nativity. He lived there for thirty years in great abstinence and unceasing prayer. People flocked to the ascetic, wishing to live under his guidance. When the cave could no longer hold all the monks, Saint Theodosius prayed that the Lord Himself would indicate a place for the monks. Taking a censer with cold charcoal and incense, the monk started walking into the desert.

At a certain spot the charcoal ignited by itself and the incense smoke began to rise. Here the monk established the first cenobitic monastery, or Lavra (meaning “broad” or “populous”). Soon the Lavra of Saint Theodosius became renowned, and up to 700 monks gathered at it. According to the final testament of Saint Theodosius, the Lavra rendered service to neighbor, giving aid to the poor and providing shelter for wanderers.

Saint Theodosius was extremely compassionate. Once, when there was a famine in Palestine and a multitude of people gathered at the monastery, the monk gave orders to allow everyone into the monastery enclosure. His disciples were annoyed, knowing that the monastery did not have the means to feed all those who had come. But when they went into the bakery, they saw that through the prayers of the abba, it was filled with bread. This miracle was repeated every time Saint Theodosius wanted to help the destitute.

At the monastery, Saint Theodosius built a home for taking in strangers, separate infirmaries for monks and laymen, and also a shelter for the dying. Seeing that people from various lands gathered at the Lavra, the saint arranged for services in the various languages: Greek, Georgian and Armenian. All gathered to receive the Holy Mysteries in the large church, where divine services were chanted in Greek.

During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius (491-518) there arose the heresy of Eutychius and Severus, which recognized neither the sacraments nor the clergy. The emperor accepted the false teaching, and the Orthodox began to suffer persecution. Saint Theodosius stood firmly in defense of Orthodoxy and wrote a letter to the emperor on behalf of the monks, in which they denounced him and refuted the heresy with the teachings of the Ecumenical Councils. He affirmed moreover, that the desert-dwellers and monks would firmly support the Orthodox teaching. The emperor showed restraint for a short while, but then he renewed his persecution of the Orthodox. The holy Elder then showed great zeal for the truth. Leaving the monastery, he came to Jerusalem and in the church, he stood at the high place and cried out for all to hear: “Whoever does not honor the four Ecumenical Councils, let him be anathema!” For this bold deed the monk was sent to prison, but soon returned after the death of the emperor.

Saint Theodosius accomplished many healings and other miracles during his life, coming to the aid of the needy. Through his prayers he once destroyed the locusts devastating the fields in Palestine. Also by his intercession, soldiers were saved from death, and he also saved those perishing in shipwrecks and those lost in the desert.

Once, the saint gave orders to strike the semandron (a piece of wood hit with a mallet), so that the brethren would gather at prayer. He told them, “The wrath of God draws near the East.” After several days it became known that a strong earthquake had destroyed the city of Antioch at the very hour when the saint had summoned the brethren to prayer.

Before his death, Saint Theodosius summoned to him three beloved bishops and revealed to them that he would soon depart to the Lord. After three days, he died at the age of 105. The saint’s body was buried with reverence in the cave in which he lived at the beginning of his ascetic deeds.

Saint Nino (Nina), Equal to the Apostles, Enlightener of Georgia

January 14

*O handmaiden of the Word of God,
who equaled the first-called Apostle Andrew in preaching,
and emulated the other Apostles;
enlightener of Iberia and lyre of the Holy Spirit,
Holy equal of the Apostles Nina,
pray to Christ God for the salvation of our souls.*

Troparion



PARISH WISH LIST

A wish list to help our parish grow!

SPECIAL, one-time needs or items

LED lights or lanterns e.g. strings of Christmas lights, to illuminate our entrances temporarily.
(Electrical work needed must be postponed until the summer.)

RECURRING needs:

Paper Plates (small and large), **Paper Bowls, Hot Cups**

Napkins

Plastic Utensils, especially **Forks**

Paper Towels

Toilet Paper

Holy Mother Olympia, pray to God for us!

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

St Olympia Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 16, 7 PM via Google Meet

Annual Parish Meeting

Sunday, February 2, after Divine Liturgy

Contact one of the Parish Council members with any questions or agenda items for the meeting.

Diocesan Council Meeting

Monday, January 22, 11 AM

Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville, NY

WEEKDAY VESPERS 4 PM (Winter Time!) AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at mothersophronia@gmail.com

or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead.

*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named,*

*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory,
to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,
that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;*

*that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
may be able to comprehend with all the saints
what is the width and length and depth and height –*

*to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge;
that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Ephesians 3:14-19