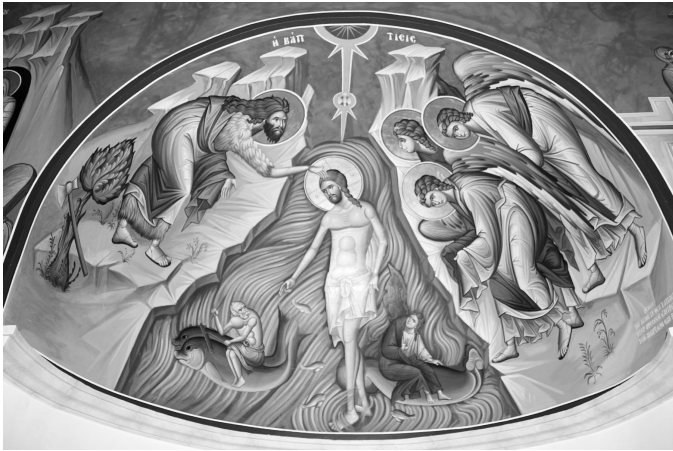




The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

+ January 1st, 2025 + Eve of Theophany + Sunday before Theophany



Hymns for This Week

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.

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.

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.

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.

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."

Epistle Reading - 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Gospel Reading - Luke 3:1-18

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting. If you have questions please let us know!*

filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin 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.” So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?” He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.” Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?” So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.” Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.



This Week's Schedule Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

THIS WEEKEND - Eve of Theophany

Saturday, January 4th

Liturgy at Holy Resurrection St. Alexis Chapel - 9 AM

Orthodoxy 101 - 3:30 PM

Great Vespers @ 5 PM

Confession available before or after Vespers

Sunday, January 5th

Matins @ 8 AM, Hours @ 8:40 AM,

Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM followed by Great Blessing
of the Waters, Coffee Hour

(Church School will start back next week Jan 12th)

The Great Feast of the Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Monday, January 6th

9 AM: Divine Liturgy for the Feast

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THIS WEEK

House Blessings All Week *(see schedule below)*

WED - No Open Church or Akathist

THURS - No Bible Study

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NEXT WEEKEND

Saturday, January 11th

Friends of the Poor - 9 AM

Orthodoxy 101 - 3:30 PM

Great Vespers @ 5 PM

Confession available before or after Vespers

Sunday, January 12th

Matins @ 8 AM, Hours @ 8:40 AM,

Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM, Church School, Coffee Hour

Parish Council Meeting @ 11:30 AM



ANNOUNCEMENTS

& Upcoming Parish Events

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+++ Weekly / Monthly +++

Bible Study Thursdays at 11 AM. Everyone is welcome. We are reading through the Acts of the Apostles with discussions.

ORTHODOXY 101 Saturdays @ 3:30 PM: Orthodoxy 101 is for visitors, inquirers, catechumens or anyone interested in learning more about the foundations of our faith. 1 hour followed by Great Vespers.

Parish Potlucks are usually the last Sunday of each month. Our next potluck is January 26th.

Friends of the Poor is usually the second Saturday of each month. The next gathering will be SAT, January 11th @ 9 AM

Holy Trinity Parish Council is usually the second Sunday of each month. Our next meeting is SUN, Jan 12th @ 11:30 AM

Annual Parish Council Meeting/ Nominations for Office - Sunday, January 26th, 2024 following Divine Liturgy, all members are asked to attend our annual parish meeting. **Election for church council officers will be conducted.** Qualification for election into office per HTOC bylaws requires that one be at least 21 years of age; a voting member of the parish for at least one year for

trustees and two years for officers (*NOTE: New members from the Cathedral will be eligible to become a trustee this year*); an active communicant of the sacraments (confession / communion); meet all canonical requirements of the faith; and a person of the church in conduct and speech. HTOC officers at trustees serve for a maximum of 6 yrs at a time. If you would like to serve on the Parish Council please contact one of the members of this year's nominating committee - Andy Kondratick, Donna Stankeiwicz, Christ Yanovich, or Fr. Innocent.

GIVING ENVELOPES: The 2025 Giving Envelopes will be available in the back of the church NEXT Sunday Jan. 12th (*note new date - we apologize for the delay*). If you would like envelopes and there is not a box in the back for you, OR if you received envelopes and would no longer like to receive them, please see Paula Holoviak or Deborah Mills.

2025 Parish Calendars are here!

A very special thank you to David and Patricia Yeosock and the Yeosock Funeral Home for sponsoring this year's beautiful calendar published by St. Tikhon's Monastery. Pick up your free calendar at the candle stand. One calendar per family.

2025 HOME BLESSINGS

PLEASE READ FOR INSTRUCTIONS

The Blessing of Homes will begin **Tuesday, January 7th**. The order in which homes are blessed will follow the normal pattern. Please see the schedule below. You can prepare for our visit by having an icon, candle, bowl for holy water, and list for living & departed. If you do not want your home blessed this year (but normally do) please indicate so on the signup sheet in the vestibule.

NEW PARISH MEMBERS OR NEW TO THE COMMUNITY, please signup in the vestibule and indicate if the scheduled day for your area works and if you have any time restrictions when you're not available. If you live outside the areas listed below see Fr. Innocent. It would be wonderful to bless all of your homes. Fr. Innocent and the boys look forward to this joyful time with each one of you!

Home Blessing Schedule

Tues, Jan 7th: Miners Mill, Parsons, Plains (1 PM - 5 PM)

!!! Please note the time change above for Tuesday !!!

Wed, Jan 8th: Plains, Hudson, Laflin, Pittston, Moosic Area, Old Forge, Bald Mountain (1 PM - 5 PM)

Thurs, Jan 9th: Mountaintop, Hanover Twp, Nanticoke Area (11 AM - 5 PM)

Tues, Jan 14th: Wilkes Barre City & Township, Kingston & Westside, and homes missed earlier (11 AM - 5 PM)

By Appointment: Back Mountain, Outside of Area

Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$12,305

Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$2,840

Last Week's Collection (12/29/24) : \$5,584

Birthdays & Anniversaries

January Birthdays: Coleen King (1/1), Mary Krill (1/1), Greg Polk (1/4), Melissa Donlick (1/5), Sonja Kay (1/5), Margaret Krout (1/7), Jerry Stankiewicz (1/8), David Welgus (1/11), Amanda Benczkowski (1/17), Matthias Haugh (1/22), Josie Bisset (1/31), Amanda Benczkowski, Matthias Haugh **Anniversaries: N/A**

This Week's Birthdays: Melissa Donlick (1/5), Sonja Kay (1/5), Margaret Krout (1/7), Jerry Stankiewicz (1/8), David Welgus (1/11)

“Repentance is the renewal of life. It is not just regret for past mistakes but a continual effort to align our lives with God’s will.”

St. Paisios of the Holy Mountain

“To prepare the way for the Lord means to purify the heart of all that is not of God, so it may become a dwelling place for His presence.”

St. Sophrony of Essex

PARISH PRAYER LIST Living: Homebound - Evelyn, Vladimir, Jeri, Marsha, David, Paul, Archpriest Theodore, Mat. Elizabeth, Mary, Patricia, Barbara, Jeri, Joan, Irene, Sonja **Sick & Suffering** - Cynthia Dulsky, Nadine Breisch, Tom & Joan Austin, Elizabeth Hutz, Mary Hutz, Delores Voda, David Lezinsky, June, Myra, Bob Lutzick, Leann, Madison & Millie Nicholas, Gregory Krevko, Tom Vaskalis, David, Alice Liskowski, Delores Tressa, Sandra Condon **Departed:** Michael Kondratick, Mary Jo, Christine, Carol, Kristyna, Evelyn Kozminski



Words of Wisdom From the Saints & Teachers

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MAJOR FEAST - Jan 6th **Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**



Homily for the Eve of Theophany

by Met Anthony Bloom

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The day of the Theophany is the day when the whole world is being renewed and becomes a partaker of the sanctity of God. But at the same time, it is the day when Christ enters on the way to Calvary.

He came to John the Baptist at the Jordan not in order to be cleansed, because he was free of sin—both as God and in His humanity made pure throughout the history of Israel by those ancestors who had given their lives to God and whose sanctity culminated in the all-purity of the Mother of God, who was so pure, so stainless that She could be brought into the Holy of Holies, which even the High Priest dared not enter except once a year, and only after a special sanctification.

Christ did not need cleansing. But these waters, into which all the sinners who had come to John the Baptist confessing the evil of their lives had washed themselves, were as it were heavy with the sinfulness and therefore the mortality of mankind. They had become waters of

death, and it is in these waters that the Lord Jesus Christ immersed Himself on that day, taking upon Himself the mortality resulting from the sin of man.

He comes, immortal in His humanity and His divinity, and at the same time He vests Himself with the mortality of the sinful world. This is the beginning of the way to Calvary. This is a day when we marvel at the infinite love of God. But as on every other occasion, man had to participate completely in the ways of salvation that God had provided. And this is why Christ comes and becomes partaker of our mortality, to save us. The culminating point will come on Calvary when He will say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? It will be a moment when God as He was in His humanity will have lost communion with the Father by partaking of the destiny of mankind. This is the ultimate act of divine love.

Let us therefore today wonder and marvel, and worship this love of God, and learn from Him; because He said in the Gospel, I have given you an example. Follow it. We are called, within the limits of our sinfulness and humanity, to bear one another's burdens, unto life and unto death. Let us learn from this. We find it so difficult to bear the burdens of even those whom we love—and practically impossible to shoulder the burdens of those whom we do not love with a natural, direct tenderness. Let us learn, because otherwise we will not have learned the first lesson that Christ gives us when He enters upon His ministry. Amen.

*“A Christian must always ask: What fruit
am I bearing? Does my faith bring life to
others or only to myself?”*

St. Maria of Paris

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*“God’s justice is not like human justice. It
is always tempered with mercy and love,
for He desires not the death of a sinner
but that he turns and lives.”*

St. Justin Popovich
