

THE ORTHODOX POST

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Pastor's Message

By Father David Fox

We have experienced together through prayer the Nativity of our Lord; this month we will experience together on Friday, January 6th at 10 a.m. and on Sunday Jan. 8th the Feast of the Theophany, when our Lord was Baptized by John in the Jordan. In reading the below, you will discover the meaning of the (different) Theophanies in the Church, why the Baptism of Jesus and not his Birth is the Theophany (manifestation or revealing of God), what is the difference between the Jewish historical practice of baptism, the baptism of John the Baptist and the Apostolic Baptism in the name of Christ (our Baptism), and finally, why Jesus was Baptized, and what His Baptism means for us today. Here are excerpts from a sermon by St. John Chrysostom that help us understand this Feast:

First of all therefore, it is necessary to say that there is not one Theophany, but two: the one actual, which already has occurred, and the second in future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world. About this one and about the other you will hear today from Paul: "awaiting the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:11-13)?

President's Message

By Lou Foundos

December was an especially busy month for the St. Nicholas community. We started the month by celebrating a liturgy for our Patron Saint on December 6th. This was followed the next Sunday with our annual St. Nicholas Day luncheon. The response was overwhelming, and we served about 110 adults after the children had eaten and went upstairs to practice the Christmas Pageant. We also had invited Sarah Frances from Boston as our guest speaker. Many

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Father David's Message	1
President's Message	1
Daughters' Corner	2
Church Activities	3
Community News	3
This Month's Major Feast Days	5
Major Events & Sunday Ushers' List	6

Why is not that day, on which the Lord was born, considered Theophany -- but rather this day on which He was baptised? Because Christ made Himself known to all -- not then when He was born -- but then when He was baptised. Until this time He was not known to the people. And that the people did not know Him, Who He was, listen about this to John the Baptist, who says: "Amidst you standeth, Him Whom ye know not of" (Jn.1:26). And is it surprising that others did not know Him, when even the Baptist did not know Him until that day? There was a Jewish baptism, which cleansed from bodily impurities, but not to remove sins. Thus, whoever committed adultery, or decided on thievery, or who did some other kind of misdeed, it did not free him from guilt. But whoever touched the bones of the dead, whoever tasted food forbidden by the law, whoever approached from contamination, whoever consorted with lepers -- that one washed, and until evening was impure, and then cleansed?

Please see *Pastor's Message* on page 4

people that attended the dinner told me it was a moving talk and gave them a lot of food for thought. A special thanks to Larry Jance and Mark Papalexis and the other folks that helped in the kitchen, serving the tables and cleaning up at the end.

The next Sunday was also quite busy since the children performed the nativity story in the annual Christmas Pageant. This was probably one of the largest pageants that we have had. This required a lot of work rehearsing

Please see *President's Message* on page 4

Daughters' Corner

By Christina Liolin

On December 18th, the Daughters held the annual Christmas Pancake Breakfast after the Christmas Pageant. The children and Sunday School teachers did a great job with the pageant, and Tina Peters followed with her usual superb pancakes. We all had a wonderful time and thoroughly enjoyed the performances of Angela Mile on the violin and Melissa Heiser on the piano. We also had a visit from Santa Claus who distributed goodies to the children.

Christmas Pageant / Pancake Breakfast

On Sunday, December 18th our Sunday School performed their annual Christmas Pageant with a large cast of smiling faces, great theatrical ability and beautiful voices. They were very well received by the audience. Our sincere thanks to Alexandra Liolin who directed the Pageant and Prifteresha Kerri Fox, Barbara Duggan, Adelina Llupa and Jim Oswald who spent many hours working with the children in preparation for this special day. The Pageant was followed by our annual Pancake Breakfast featuring the "out of this world" pancakes made by our own Tina Peters. Even Santa surprised us with a visit and spoke to all the children and had a little treat for each of them, including some of the grown up children too!! Special thanks to all those who helped to make this joyful event take place.

On behalf of the Daughters, I would like to thank everyone who helped make it such a special day (and you know who you are!)



Symbols of Our Christmas Pageant



Pancake Breakfast

Our Talented Young Musicians

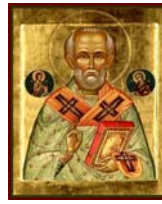
A Visit from Santa

Church Activities & Community News

By Linda Foundos

St. Nicholas Day Celebration:

On Sunday, December 11th our annual celebration luncheon was held in honor of our Patron Saint Nicholas. What a lovely, festive occasion with an over-flow crowd and a full program. We were honored to have Sarah Frances as our guest speaker who shared with us her path from almost becoming a Presbyterian minister to converting and becoming an Orthodox Chaplain in a hospice center. What a warm, caring person to do such needed work, serving the terminally ill. The meal prepared for us by our Three Master Chefs, Larry Jance, Mark Papalexis and Nasi Pavlo, was excellent!! We thank them for their labors. Also thanks to Christina Liolin who coordinated all of the elements of this luncheon including our wonderful wait staff, our sound



system expert, our shoppers, moms who prepared pasta for the children, set-up and clean-up volunteers. Every event always has so much behind the scenes that help to make it such a success. We also had the grand prize drawing of our

50/50 Raffle which was won by a gentleman from Michael Kelapire's office. A huge "Thanks" to Michael for his coordination and fund raising efforts. Also, a "thank you" to all who sold and bought tickets. We had many lovely door prizes for those in attendance as well. Christina Liolin, President of the Daughters of St. Nicholas, presented the Parish Council Vice President, Dr. Petrika Troja, with a \$1,500 donation from the Daughters to St. Nicholas. Good fellowship was enjoyed by everyone!!!!

Parish News

- Many Years Master Congratulations to our Bishop, His Grace Bishop Nikon on his enthronement as Bishop of Boston and New England. Now, along with being the Bishop of the Albanian Archdiocese, Bishop Nikon is also the Bishop of all the OCA churches in New England. The beautiful service took place on Saturday, December 17th in Boston at the Holy Trinity Cathedral with Metropolitan Herman officiating and numerous clergy participating. May God grant him many years!!
- Congratulations to Alexandra Liolin on the completion of her Masters Degree in Elementary Education from Manhattanville College. She accomplished this while working full time and teaching Sunday School each week. Her parents Christina and Jim Liolin are very proud of her. We wish her much success and happiness.
- Welcome to Alexis (Peters) and Stefan Heuser and daughters Skyler and Sophia. Alexis, daughter of Tina and Bill Peters, who makes her home in Switzerland will be in the United States for a three month visit with family and friends and some business for husband Stefan. The Peters family and friends are delighted have them here.
- Get well wishes and prayers go out to Sophia Heuser. This adorable child is very precious to so many. May God's blessings be with her.
- Our deepest sympathy to the Grabocka family on the tragic loss of their daughter Simona. May her memory be eternal.

Archdiocese Student Fund -- UPDATE

By James Liolin

Seminarian Activity: The student activity has been encouraging and positive. We have 4 seminarians from several parishes and Albania. They are working hard scholastically and traveling to parishes within the Archdiocese. During these intern style visitations, they are acquiring practical hands-on experience-- early on-- to gain first hand knowledge of parish life. They are participating in liturgical services and meeting with parish councils in Cleveland, Jamestown, Philadelphia, Worcester and Boston. All of these experiences help to prepare them for their future service. We are currently reviewing information from one of our Western parishes on another potential candidate. We have a good group of interested, concerned and dedicated young men. We need to encourage more like them.

Ordinations: During this year --as you may have heard -- three men were ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Nikon. Fr. Dn. Jason Vansuch, Fr. Dn. Denis Nagi and Fr. Dn. Greg Vreto. Their commitment -- along with our seminarians-- truly shows growth in our church.

Student Fund Financial Support: The Student Fund raised over \$20,500 from various donors since our October 2005 Assembly. If you would like to help us grow our church and support the seminarians and seminaries, please send your donation to: The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese Student Fund (AOA Student Fund). 523 East Broadway, South Boston, Ma 02127.

President's Message from page 1

and preparing the costumes, learning lines and practicing the songs. It turned out to be a "Hollywood" special, and the children did a magnificent job. I would like to personally thank the teachers, especially Alexandra Liolin, for her time and effort organizing, rehearsing, and preparing the children to bring out the best in them. We also enjoyed a wonderful pancake breakfast after the pageant hosted by the Daughters of St. Nicholas. A special thanks to Tina Peters and all her helpers in the kitchen for the delicious pancakes and for keeping the pancakes moving.

Hope to see you all at the icon presentation scheduled for Sunday, January 8th after liturgy. This is one of major fundraisers, so we would like as many to participate as possible.

Just a reminder, if you have not filled out your 2006 pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. It is important for us to know the pledges for the year so we can do the proper budgeting.

Pastor's Message from page 1

Thus, Jewish cleansings did not free from sins, but only from bodily impurities...

And the baptism of John was far more sublime than the Jewish, but less so than ours: it was like a bridge between both baptisms, leading across itself from the first to the last. John did not say: wash your clothes, wash your body, and ye will be pure, but what? -- "bear ye fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt 3:8). Since it was more than of the Jews, but less than ours: the baptism of John did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness by grace: it gave the commandment to repent, but it was powerless to absolve sins...

Now it is necessary to say, for whom was Christ baptised and by which baptism? Neither the former the Jewish, nor the last -- ours. Whence hath He need for remission of sins, how is this possible for Him, Who hath not any sins? And so, if His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit, and He was not subject to sins, then for whom was He baptised? But first of all it is necessary for us to recognise, by which baptism He was baptised, and then it will be clear for us. By which baptism indeed was He baptised? -- Not the Jewish, nor ours, nor John's? it is evident, that He came to Jordan not for the forgiveness of sins and not for receiving the gifts of the Spirit. For whom was He baptised, if this was done not for repentance, nor for the remission of sins, nor for receiving the gifts of the Spirit? Through the other two reasons, of which about the one the disciple speaks, and about the other He Himself spoke to John. Which reason of this baptism did John declare?

Namely, that Christ should become known to the people, as Paul also mentions: "John therefore baptised with the baptism of repentance, so that through him they should believe on Him that cometh" (Acts 19:4); this was the consequence of the baptism? when all the people thronged out from all the cities to Jordan and remained on the banks of the river, and when He Himself came to be baptised and received the testimony of the Father by a voice from above and by the coming-upon of the Spirit in the form of a dove, then the testimony of John about Him was made beyond all questioning?

And there is a second reason, about which He Himself spoke -- what exactly is it? When John said: "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and Thou art come to me?" -- He answered thus: "stay now, for thus it cometh us **to fulfill every righteousness**" (Mt 3:14-15). Dost thou see the meekness of the servant? Dost thou see the humility of the Master? What does He mean: "to fulfill every righteousness?" By righteousness is meant the fulfillment of all the commandments, as is said: "both were righteous, walking faultlessly in the commandments of the Lord" (Lk 1:6). Since fulfilling this righteousness was necessary for all people -- but no one of them kept it or fulfilled it -- Christ came then and fulfilled this righteousness?

And what righteousness is there, someone will say, in being baptised? Obedience for a prophet was righteous. As Christ was circumcised, offered sacrifice, kept the Sabbath and observed the Jewish feasts, so also He added this remaining thing, that He was obedient to having been baptised by a prophet?

Christ came, and finding us afflicted by it -- He paid the debt, fulfilled the necessary and seized from it those, who were not able to pay. Wherefore He does not say: "it is necessary for us to do this or that," but rather "to fulfill every righteousness." "It is for Me, being the Master, -- says He, -- proper to make payment for the needy." Such was the reason for His baptism -- wherefore they should see, that He had fulfilled all the law -- both this reason and also that, about which was spoken of before. Wherefore also the Spirit did descend as a dove: because where there is reconciliation with God -- there also is the dove. So also in the ark of Noah the dove did bring the branch of olive -- a sign of God's love of mankind and of the cessation of the flood. And now in the form of a dove, and not in a body -- this particularly deserves to be noted -- **the Spirit descended, announcing the universal mercy of God and showing with it, that the spiritual man needs to be gentle, simple and innocent, as Christ also says: "Except ye be converted and become as children, ye shalt not enter into the Heavenly Kingdom" (Mt 18:3). But that ark, after the cessation of the flood, remained upon the earth; this ark, after the cessation of wrath, is taken to heaven, and now this Immaculate and Imperishable Body is situated at the right hand of the Father?**

Having made mention about the Body of the Lord, I shall also say a little about this, and then the conclusion of the talk. Many now will approach the Holy Table on the occasion of the feast. But some approach not with trembling, but shoving, hitting others, blazing with anger, shouting, cursing, roughing it up with their fellows with great confusion. What, tell me, art thou troubled by, my fellow? What disturbeth thee? Do urgent affairs, for certain, summon thee?...

We should approach the Holy Sacrifice with great decorum, with proper piety, so as to merit us more of God's benevolence, to cleanse one's soul and to receive eternal blessings, of which may we all be worthy by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to with Whom the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, and worship now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

This Month's Major Feast Days



January 1st

St. Basil the Great, The Archbishop of Caesarea, in Cappadocia

Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, "belongs not to the Church of Caesarea alone, nor merely to his own time, nor was he of benefit only to his own kinsmen, but rather to all lands and cities worldwide, and to all people he brought and still brings benefit, and for Christians he always was and will be a most salvific teacher."

St. Basil was born in the year 330 at Caesarea, the administrative center of Cappadocia. He was of illustrious lineage, famed for its eminence and wealth, and zealous for the Christian Faith. St. Basil studied in Constantinople and Athens. He developed a life-long friendship with Gregory the Theologian. Often, in doing the work of the church and in seeking the Fathers as well as spiritual knowledge and strength, he journeyed to distant lands such as Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

St. Basil the Great provided for "the caring for the destitute and the taking in of strangers, the supervision of virgins, written and unwritten monastic rules for monks, the arrangement of prayers [Liturgy], the felicitous arrangement of altars and other things." In the year 370, he became Bishop of Caesarea. He was famed for his reverence, deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, great learning, and his efforts for the welfare of Church peace and unity.

Sickly since youth, the toil of teaching, his life of abstinence, and the concerns and sorrows of pastoral service took their toll on him. St. Basil died on January 1, 379 at age 49. Upon the repose of St. Basil, the Church immediately began to celebrate his memory. It established that on the sacred day of remembrance of the Circumcision of Christ. (January 1), it would annually honor the memory of Basil the Great festively and with solemnity."

Saint Basil is also known as the revealer of heavenly mysteries (Ouranophantor), a "renowned and bright star," and "the glory and beauty of the Church." His honorable head is in the Great Lavra on Mt. Athos.

In some countries it is customary to sing special carols today in honor of St. Basil. He is believed to visit the homes of the faithful, and a place is set for him at the table. People visit the homes of friends and relatives, and the mistress of the house gives a small gift to the children. A special bread (Vasilopita) is blessed and distributed after the Liturgy. A silver coin is baked into the bread, and whoever receives the slice with the coin is said to receive the blessing of St. Basil for the coming year. (428 words)

January 6th

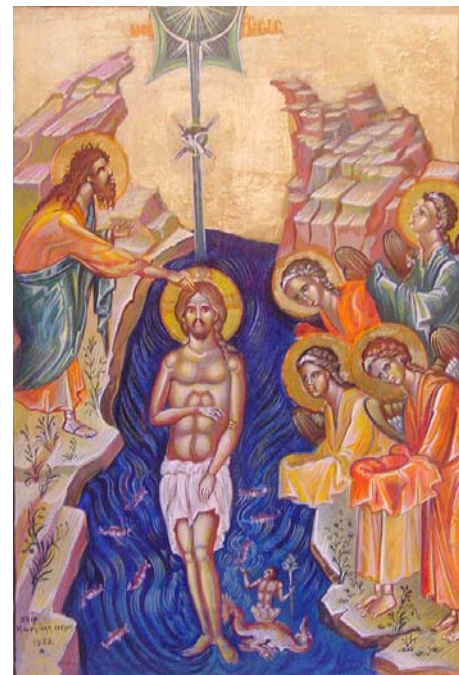
The Theophany (Epiphany) of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by the St. John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt 4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13)..

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Indivisible. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms. The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).



Major Church Activities and Events

Sun., Jan 1st: Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.
Feast of St. Basil the Great

Fri., Jan 6th: Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.
Feast of the Holy Theophany,
Blessing of Waters.

House Blessings Begin: See the Sign up Sheet
for when Fr. David will be near your home.

Sun., Jan 8th: Youth Group Meeting
ICON Auction

Thurs., Feb. 2nd: Meeting of the Lord

Sun., Feb. 5th: Zaccheaus Sunday
12th: Publican and Pharisee
19th: Prodigal Son
26th: Meatfare

Sun., March 5th: Cheesefare
6th: GREAT LENT BEGINS
25th: Annunciation.

**Ushers' Assignment List
For Sunday Services**

Jan 1: Petrika Troja/Thoma Fundo

Jan 8: Jim Liolin/Nasi Pavllo

Jan 15: Roland Llupa/Edi Sera

Jan 22: Bill Peters/Nick Papajorgji

Jan 29: Petrika Troja/Thoma Fundo

Feb 5: Jim Liolin/Nasi Pavllo

Feb 12: Petrika Troja/Thoma Fundo

Parish Council Meetings

Tuesday, Jan 3rd at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb 7th at 7:30 p.m.

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At

www.stnicholasalbanian.org

St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church
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Jamaica Estates, New York 11432



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