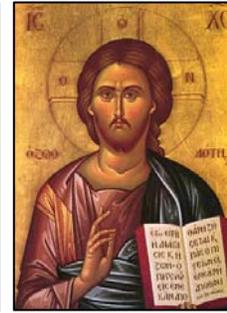




GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: www.patriarchate.org
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Website: www.goarch.org
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta Website: www.atlanta.goarch.org
St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church Website: www.saintchristopherhoc.org

St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church



313 Dividend Drive, Suite 210
Peachtree City, Georgia 30269

Very Rev. Fr. George J. Tsahakis, *Chancellor*

Liturgical Guide for Sunday, January 5, 2014

ON THIS DAY, THE EVE OF THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, WE COMMEMORATE Holy Martyrs Theopemptos and Theonas; Micah the Prophet; Apollinaria of Egypt; and our Righteous Mother Syncletica. *Through their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.*

Welcome, Visitors and Newcomers, to our Parish!

We invite you to enter your name, mail/email addresses in our Guest Register (near the entrance) if you are interested in joining and assisting with our mission's development. We want to keep you informed of our schedule and location of services. *You and your family are welcome; we look forward to knowing you. We invite you and your family to join and assist us often!*

Please consider that only baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians in canonical good standing may approach for Holy Communion. All are invited to partake of the Antidoron ("instead of the gifts") distributed at the conclusion of today's Divine Liturgy.

SPECIAL HYMNS SUNG BEFORE/AFTER SMALL ENTRANCE

1./2. Resurrectional Hymn (Third Tone) – (Hymnal-pp.106-109):

It is sung *before* and *after* the Small Entrance: Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord has shown the mighty power of His arm. He has trampled down death by death, becoming the firstborn of the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of hell and has granted to all the world His great mercy.

3. Special Hymn for the Eve of Holy Theophany – (not in Hymnal):

It is sung *after* the Small Entrance: River Jordan was turned back by Elisseus' mantle once, when the fiery man of zeal Elias had been taken up; then were its waters divided hither and thither. The running streams became dry passage unto him, truly as a sign and type of Baptism, whereby we pass to the other side of the shifting stream of this fleeting life. Christ hath appeared in the Jordan River, to sanctify the waters.

4. Hymn Commemorating St. Christopher – (see music distributed):

It is sung after the Small Entrance: Made comely with garments woven from your venerable blood, you stand before the Lord, the King of Heaven and earth, O famed Martyr Christopher. With the choirs of Angels and the Martyrs you chant, singing the thrice-holy hymn and most awesome praises. Thus, by your intercessions with God, save us, your servants.

5. Kontakion for the Eve of Holy Theophany – (not in Hymnal):

It is sung after the Small Entrance: Today the Lord Christ has appeared in the Jordan's waters, and He has cried out to John: "Do not fear to baptize Me, for by My own will I have indeed come to save Adam, the first-created man."

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES **FROM TODAY'S ORTHROS & DIVINE LITURGY**

The Scriptures were not given us for this only, that we might have them in books, but that we might engrave them on our hearts. – St. John Chrysostom

Gospel Reading During Orthros Service (Luke 24:36-53)

While they were talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet; see that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate in their presence. Then He said to them, "These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about Me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up His hands, He blessed them. While He was blessing them, He withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. Amen.

Epistle Reading During Divine Liturgy (2 Tim. 4:5-8)

⁵As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. ⁶As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will

give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Gospel Reading During Divine Liturgy (Mark 1:1-8)

1The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,' " 4John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7He proclaimed, "The One Who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE (TRY TO COMMIT TO MEMORY):

*"And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with Whom I am well pleased."
(Mt. 3:17)*

PASTORAL REFLECTION FROM FR. GEORGE:

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

The celebrations of the events of the life of Jesus Christ as they are celebrated today were not instituted at the very beginning of the Christian era; they were held by the believers of the early Church as vivid commemorations without a connection with certain days and hymns, but as a real event of the Lord Who was present in the Church.

Later on, when the Church was firmly established and its believers were free to worship the True God, they decided to commemorate and observe annually in the calendar year the events of the life of the Church and especially those of the Life and Person of Jesus Christ, Whom they worshipped along with the

Father and the Holy Spirit with prayers, hymns, and readings appropriate for the occasion. The reason why the first Christians did not institute these celebrations and observances at the very beginning is mainly because of the persecutions of the Church and its believers.

For three entire centuries, the Church of Christ was underground, in catacombs, where under the grass and flowers of the earth was nourished the tree of faith and worship. The Church extended the Kingdom of God to the hearts of its faithful without pompous expressions. These winding underground centers, the catacombs, were both the workshop of the rebirth of the Christians and also their burial places. It is not our purpose here to develop further the struggles and faith of the early Church of Christ which, since then, has made the Church of the Living God “the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” What we wish to emphasize is that during the first three centuries, the Church of Christ developed a clear ecclesiastical conscience, both in theory and in practice; the Church formulated the principles of faith and worship and defended them with enormous sacrifices, fighting off both external and internal falsifications.

For three centuries, the Church developed its roots under the earth and watered them with the moisture of its catacombs and the blood of its martyrs. The Church spread its roots from Antioch to Rome. Alexandria, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Athens also opened underground centers of the Christian faith which were warmed and brightened by the torches of devotion, sacrifice, and the cultivation of Christian character and conscience.

When the fullness of time came, that is, when the roots were ready to present an incorruptible trunk above the earth, then Divine Providence appointed political conditions and a remarkable personality, Constantine the Great, who not so much from a religious outlook as from a political foresight gave to the Church of Christ the right of free exercise in matters of faith and worship. This action of expediency was initiated and imposed by the emperor.

The Church of Christ came out of its refuge from the persecutions armed with the strength of love among its members and equipped for defense and for missionary endeavors. Now the Church could freely apply its principles.

The Church's first concern was the development of its prayer and worship, which ratify the faith and cultivate the relations of its members. This is why the 4th century is the golden link which connects the underground life of the Church with its later course on the surface of the earth. The celebrations of Theophany and Christmas, the writing of divine liturgies, the formulation of faith in the Creed, and so many other incidents are permanent foundations which took place during the 4th century and which developed as flowers springing from roots which had existed beforehand.

The life of the Church has kept the fragrance of these unwithering flowers until today, and their aroma has given to civilization the precious Christian atmosphere which we breathe today. If we of today hold lamps and torches in our hands and in our hearts, this light has been transmitted from the lamps and torches which were held burning by the men and women of the catacombs who gave this inheritance of faith from their hearts. (*from Fr. George Mastrantonis*)

Holy Theophany and the Blessing of the Waters:

During today's church services on the Eve of the Feast and tomorrow evening's Feast of Theophany, water is blessed and given to the faithful to carry home and use throughout the year. By His Baptism in the Jordan, Jesus Christ touched our lives, the environment, and our whole world, revealing His Divinity and desire to make all things, nature and the world, holy. This is a sign that our lives are precious to the Lord and we are immersed in His love. Following today's Blessing (*Agiasmos*) of the Water, *Fr. George* will distribute blessed water to all present.



"Follow" & "Like" our Facebook page. *Be sure to check our status for updates and photos.*

And on this the four hundred and ninety-second Sunday of our St. Christopher's parish community, we continue to thank each of you for your presence and support. Although it may seem like we are just a handful of men, women and children, if we commit ourselves to serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will experience the miracle of growth as the Holy Spirit brings others into His service to help us build His new church in the Peachtree City, Georgia area for the glory of God!

COMMUNITY SCHEDULE

Sunday, January 5 (Eve/Vigil-Theophany of our Lord and Savior/Strict Fast):

- 7:45 am Orthros Service**
- 9:00 am Divine Liturgy/Blessing of the Water/
Oath of Office for 2014 Parish Council/Coffee Fellowship**
- 11:30 am Parish Council Meeting (includes election of new officers for 2014)**

Monday, January 6 (Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior):

- 4:00 pm Great Hours of Holy Theophany**
- 5:00 pm Great Vespers Service**
- 5:45 pm Divine Liturgy of St. Basil/Blessing of the Water (Evening),
followed by Community Dinner (please bring non-fasting food)**

Tuesday, January 7 (Synaxis of St. John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist & Forerunner):

- 5:00 pm Great Vespers Service**
- 5:45 pm Divine Liturgy (Evening), followed by Community Dinner
(please bring non-fasting food)**

Thursday, January 9:

- 6:30 pm Choir Practice**

Sunday, January 12 (Sunday After the Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior):

- 7:45 am Orthros Service**
- 9:00 am Divine Liturgy/Sacrament of Holy Baptism**
- 10:30 am Community Luncheon**

Your continued support and mutual encouragement are essential and appreciated!

THEOPHANY MESSAGE
FROM HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS

January, 2014

My dearly beloved,

“Today the streams of Jordan are changed into healing by the presence of the Lord.

Today all creation is watered by mystical streams. Today the failings of mankind are being washed away by the waters of Jordan. Today Paradise is opened for men and the Sun of Righteousness shines down on us.” [Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem]

Greetings in the Name of our Incarnate Lord and Blessed Savior! As we gather together for this blessed Feast Day, I send my prayers and best wishes for a New Year abundant in joy, health, prosperity and peace of mind and heart.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, which is commonly referred to as *Epiphany* (επιφάνεια, “the appearance; miraculous phenomenon”). However it is really the Feast of the *Theophany* (Θεοφάνεια, “God shining forth”), because today we celebrate the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus Christ, when He was baptized by St. John the Forerunner. But at the very same time, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity appeared: the voice of God the Father: “This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased”; the Son of God accepted baptism from St. John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended from the Father on the Son. In this way, “the worship of the Trinity was made manifest” for the first time.

The blessing of the water at the Feast of Theophany is a visible sign that all Creation is filled with the presence of God. For it was not the water that cleansed Him, but rather He Who sanctified water by consenting to be baptized. Thus the waters of the River Jordan are sanctified, and all the waters of Creation and through them the whole world, in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The blessing of the waters, the calling down of Divine grace upon all Creation, is a symbol and a promise of the restoration and redemption for all mankind in Christ.

As Orthodox Christians from across our Metropolis and the country gather together in Tarpon Springs, to welcome our spiritual father, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, and to celebrate the Feast Day of Theophany as one family in Christ, I wish to express our love and respect to Your Eminence. We prayerfully beseech our Lord to grant Your Eminence many, many years of good health, inspiration, and abundant joy as You lead our Greek Orthodox Church here in America.

In closing, I pray that the grace and spirit of this beautiful day will strengthen us and inspire us to serve the Lord with joy and gladness today and always! I remain,

With paternal blessings and with much love in Christ,

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta