

John the Baptist, baptizer and worshiper

The paradox that Jesus Christ might be revealed as God through an act of submittal to a mere man, John, is shown well in the Icon. Though John is baptizing Christ, it is the former who is shown bent over in reverence to the latter. In other icons, John is shown with his face turned toward heaven and beholding the miracle of the Theophany; either way, despite being the baptizer, he is not central to the scene. Near to John is a tree with an axe laid at the root, recalling John's own preaching to those who came to him: "And now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Matt 3:10). Present in the icon, this shows that whilst the Baptizer must now "decrease so Christ may increase", John's teachings and role are not done away with now the Holy Trinity has been revealed. On the opposite bank to John the Baptist, angels wait invisibly to receive the newly baptized Christ and clothe Him. And so, on the left is the forerunner of Christ, John, with his sermon of repentance represented by the tree and axe; on the right, the angels wait with reverence to accept the newly revealed Son of God. In the middle - the moment of revelation itself.

Jesus Christ, despite being the one submerged in the Jordan, is shown as though standing up and staring straight at us. His body is depicted as strong and beautiful, as it is understood classically, and in older icons He is naked. Christ appears almost as wide as the river Jordan itself; indeed: it is as though it is Jesus Christ,

rather than the river, which cuts a swathe through the rocky wilderness on either side.

The Icon of the Theophany, as well as depicting the Holy Trinity, also answers the question of John the Baptist: I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me? The answer is in what Jesus does with His hands. Whilst in Western art, like [this painting by Da Vinci](#), Jesus is shown as submitting to John's authority, in Orthodox icons Christ's hands are not shown in prayer, but in a sign of blessing. Rather than the waters of Jordan cleansing Christ, it is Christ Who cleans the waters. This is why in the bottom of most Theophany Icons, little creatures appear to be fleeing from the feet of Christ. This is a reflection of the words of the Psalmist regarding the Messiah (Christ): "the sea saw and fled, the Jordan turned back" (Psalm 114:3).

The Jordan (left) and the Sea, which is also represented as a woman wearing a crown, or as a monster

This is the depth and profundity of the Baptism of Christ; the feast of lights which revealed the Holy Trinity, and cleansed the waters of baptism so that we, like the fishes shown in the icon, may swim in pure waters.

Of old, the river Jordan Turned back before Elisha's mantle at Elijah's ascension. The waters were parted in two And the waterway became a dry path. This is truly a symbol of baptism By which we pass through this mortal life. Christ has appeared in the Jordan to sanctify the waters!



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

Bulletin for Sunday, January 06, 2019

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians

we stand against racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

Weekly Services

Tuesdays at 8:30a - Daily Matins
Wednesdays at 6:00p - Daily Vespers (The Church is open at 4:30p for "Open Doors" - confession, meditation and reflection).
Thursday at 8:30a - Daily Matins
Saturday at 5:30p - Great Vespers
Sunday at 9:30a - Divine Liturgy

Members of our Parish Council are:

Greg Jankura - Council President

Natalie Kucharski - Council Treasurer

Kyle Hollis - Member at Large

Glenn PenkoffLedbeck - Council Secretary

Michael Kuziak - Council Vice President

Roderick Seurattan - Member at Large

Pastoral Care - General Information

- *Emergency Sick Calls* can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.
- *Anointing in Sickness*: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.
- *Marriages and Baptisms* require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!
- *Funerals* are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

Announcements

House Blessings

The blessing of homes will begin this week and will continue throughout the month of January, concluding on Friday, February 1st. You may contact Fr Steven directly or email

him. Please have a couple of dates and times which would be convenient for you to have your home blessed.

Book/Bible Study

Once House Blessings have concluded, I would like to start our study sessions again. These will run on Tuesday mornings, after Matins, and Thursday evenings. They will begin in February and will run through Lent. If you have any suggestions as to possible study topics please let me know what they might be.

Rally After Rally

Our next event will be at All Saints in Hartford, CT on Friday, February 22nd @ 6:30pm-9:30pm.

Our next "Rally after Rally" will be on another Fast Free Friday (Yay!), and will serve not only as a chance to look at our next section on "Living Life Abundantly," but will also double as our "Pre-Lenten Retreat" for our area youth.

Fr. James Parnell
Pastor, All Saints -- Hartford, CT
Associate Youth Director - DNE
Office: (860) 922-5329
Mobile: (914) 573-8051

Saints and Feasts

on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Wisdom of the Fathers

Christ is illumined, let us shine forth with Him. Christ is baptized, let us descend with Him that we may also ascend with Him.

St. Gregory the Theologian

Oration on the Holy Lights, Epiphany 381, 10-16., 4th Century

Reflection



Baptism of Christ | The Theophany Icon

From the first century of the Christian Church, there has always been "The Festival of Lights". In the depth of

Midwinter, this feast celebrated the advent of the Son of God's coming into the world as Jesus Christ, and His early years up to and including His baptism in the Jordan, which heralded the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth.

Over the centuries, the various aspects

of Christ's early years were separated into individual feasts on different days: His **Nativity**, the Visitation of the Magi, His presentation in the Temple, and His circumcision. But the principal event of the Feast of Lights - Christ's Baptism - continued to be commemorated on the 6th of January. Why is this event so important?

The event depicted in the icon is that described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke; here is Matthew's version:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
(Matthew 3:13-17)

This, then, is the **Epiphany** (revelation) of the Holy Trinity, otherwise known as **Theophany** which literally means a "revelation of God" in Greek (Θεοφάνεια; the Russian is Богоявление and means the same).

the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling 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 have enlightened the world, glory to You.

Tone 4 Kontakion of the Feast

Today You have shone forth to the world, O Lord, and the light of Your countenance has been marked on us. Knowing You, we sing Your praises. You have come and revealed Yourself, O unapproachable Light.

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Psalm 117.26,1.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Verse: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endures forever.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7.

TITUS, my son, 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 the great God and Savior 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.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Gospel Reading

The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ The Reading is from Matthew 3:13-17

At that time, Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting



January 06

The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

About the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, John the Forerunner, who was

some six months older than Our Saviour according to the flesh, and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then our Saviour also came from Galilee to the Jordan, and sought and received baptism though He was the Master and John was but a servant. Whereupon, there came to pass those marvellous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized and the voice was heard from the Heavens hearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22). From these events the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," that is, the divine manifestation, God's appearance among men. On this venerable day the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth also began the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Lives of the Saints

Feast of the Theophany of our Lord 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; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint 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). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory

the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but “to bury human sin by water,” to fulfill the Law, and to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify “the nature of water” and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

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 Undivided. 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).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a

Wednesday or Friday.

Parish Calendar

Service and Events

January 6 to January 14, 2019

Sunday, January 6

The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
Liturgical and Education Ministry meeting
Theophany
9:30AM Divine Liturgy
11:00AM Blessing of Long Island Sound

Monday, January 7

Synaxis of John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner
Liberty Page - B

Tuesday, January 8

Bob Martin - B
George of Hozeva
8:30AM Daily Matins

Wednesday, January 9

Polyeuctus the Martyr of Melitene in Armenia
4:30PM Open Doors
6:00PM Evening Vespers

Thursday, January 10

Gregory of Nyssa
House Blessings
Akathist to St Theophan
8:30AM Daily Matins

Friday, January 11

Leavetaking of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Saturday, January 12

St. Tatiana
Saturday after Epiphany
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, January 13

Ellen Page - B
Fellowship and Stewardship Ministry
Sunday after Epiphany
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, January 14

Leavetaking of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
Gail Kuziak
Akathist to Holy Hierarch Sava of Serbia
Stephen Wexell

Prayers, Intersessions and Commemorations



William, Sophia, Robert, Ann, Evelyn, Nina, John, Alex, Luke, Kathryn, Anastasia, Malcolm, Veronica, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Elena, Jevon, the new born Stella Anna, Ivan and Joscean.

And for... Sofie, Katrina, Olena, Valeriy, Olga, Tatiana, Dimitri, Alexander and Maxim.

All of our College Students: Alex, Kaitlyn, Jack, Sam, Connor, Nadia, Isaac and Matthew.

Many Years! to: Liberty Page on the occasion of her birthday and Natalie (Tatiana) Kurcharski on the occasion of her Name's Day.

Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;

All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalized, those who have no one to pray for them;

All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.

All those who have perished due to hatred and intolerance and all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

Today we commemorate:

THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST . Ven. Macarius of Mt. Athos (1431).

Hymns of the Day

Tone 1 Troparion of the Feast

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan,