

Luke 3:1-18 (*Gospel*)

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 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.

In Memoriam: Archpriest John Kuchta

Archpriest John Kuchta, 91, fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, December 28, 2019, surrounded by family, at the Joliet Area Community Hospice here.

Born on September 14, 1928, he grew up in McKeesport, PA, attending grade and high schools there. He then attended Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, South Canaan, PA. After successfully completing seminary studies, he attended Davis and Elkins College in Elkins, WV, earning a BA with a major in History.

In September of 1955 he married the former Ruth Papinchak at Saint Alexander Nevsky Parish in Pittsburgh, PA. He was ordained to the Diaconate and Holy Priesthood by Metropolitan Leonty at Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral in New York, NY in July of 1956. Father John and Matushka Ruth took their first and only parish assignment at Saint Nicholas Church in Joliet, IL, arriving on August 1, 1956. He served the people of Saint Nicholas faithfully for 56 years, teaching and receiving catechumens, baptizing, marrying, and burying two generations of parishioners.

In addition to his pastoral work at Saint Nicholas, Father John served on the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the Midwest and the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America. He also served as the Dean of the Chicago Deanery. A proponent of Orthodox Christian unity, he was a long time Treasurer of the Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago and was among its first members. He was also active in the Ecumenical Association of Joliet.

Father John was preceded in death by his wife, Matushka Ruth in March of 2012. He was the loving father of Archpriest Alexander (Natalie) Kuchta, Rebecca (Gregory) Grabavoy, and Charissa Holwey; the loving grandfather of Alayna (Matt) Jarotkiewicz, Sarah (Shawn) Bernaky, Nika (Nicholas) Giuliano, Nicholas (Becci) Holwey, Juliana (Tylar) Meeker, Rachel (Jeff) Johannsen, Michael Holwey (Lisa Nootbar, fiancée), and great-grandfather of 14. He was a dear brother of Elizabeth Melnik, and uncle to many nieces and nephews.

Donations in Father John's name may be made to Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church, to the Joliet Area Community Hospice or to the Father John Kuchta Scholarship at Saint Tikhon's Seminary. May Father John's memory be eternal!

PRAY FOR OUR CATECHUMENS

Rachael Adamcio
Luke Welch Lydia Welch
Tristen Welch Jake Muscaro

Possible Catechumens:

Loreen Welch Cheyenne Welch

May God & the Holy Spirit guide them in their journey in the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox way of Life.

40 DAY REMEMBRANCE

December 1: 3 soldiers killed in training in GA
December: 8: Serge Mihaly Jr, / John McDonald
December 15: Detective from Dayton / Mike Chemorov
December 22: CA school shooting, San Diego shooting; FF Jas from MA
December 29: Fresno shooting; Police officer killed in Detroit, Nick Hunt / Francis Zatorsky, Paulette; Sheriff in Alabama
January 12: Shooting victims from Pearl Harbor & FL Naval stations
January 19: Mary (Marika) Lefas; Jersey City shooting victims; Police officer killed in NJ, Ben the 8 yr old boy accidentally killed in Sandusky
January 26: Solider killed in Afghanistan; Susan La Valle
Feb. 2: TXChurch Shooting victims / Ed Pehanich, Sr / Police officer killed in TN

THANK YOU

Thank You to the following people for helping out at the Christmas Dinner:
Bobbie Royhab, Ron Royhab, Jean Hileman, Wayne Goleb, Aaron, Lynn, Ronnie & Royhab, Lori Kiser (St. Joes).

Those who provided food & or other tems:
Bobbie Royhab, Laura Kovach, Roddie Mazurik, Run-a Muck bar & Grill, Rick (Maintenance from Marblehead, Nancy Bunge, Lori Kiser.

If I missed anyone, please let me know. That day was the most Blessed Day I have witnessed on Christmas in a very long time. Between workers & guests 40 people were served and touched by God!

GOD BLESS ALL OF YOU!

Bishop Paul's Travel Schedule

Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, IL, January 4th to 6th

- *Services for Theophany*

St Gregory of Nyssa, Columbus, OH, January 10th to the 12th

- *Elevation of Fr. Stephen Frase and Fr. Matthew Moriak to Archpriests*
- *Ordination of Sub Deacon Peter Simko to the Diaconate*

St. Makarios Orthodox Mission, Chicago, IL, January 18th to 19th

- *Celebration of Patronal feast day*

VIGILS- CHRISTMAS

Janice Timko(3) In Blessed and loving memory of my precious parents, Sophia and Peter Monak, grandparents, Baba Julia and Zedo Andrew Millie and family, Harry and Phil on the Nativity of Christ. "Vechnaya Pamyat!"; Christmas Blessings to my family Ruth, Dorothy, Lew and family, Phillip (Andy) Rebecca and grandchildren. "Mnohaya Leta!"; Christmas Blessings to the Bill Glovinsky Family and the Greg Twarek Family. "Mnohaya Leta!"

Twarek (4) Christmas Blessings and good health to our family and friends; In Loving memory of our parents, grandparents, Godparents and all departed family and friends



January Special Collection

Marblehead, OH Police
Fr. Andrew serves as
Chaplain.

THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATERS

As a great feast, Theophany includes a whole cycle of liturgical services. On the Forefeast of Theophany (January 5), we read according to tradition the Great Hours, a prayer service consisting of many hymns, psalms and other readings from the Old and New Testaments. After the Great Hours, the Great Vespers of Theophany combined with the Liturgy of St. Basil is celebrated. All these services are then crowned with a special rite of Blessing of the Waters, a rite which is repeated on the Feast of Theophany following Matins and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

The Blessing of the Waters on the Forefeast of Theophany is sometimes called the Small Blessing of the waters and on the Feast of Theophany it is called the Great Blessing of the Waters. Both are exactly the same., However, and have the same value. It is done twice probably because of the great throngs of people who traditionally came to receive holy water. A sign of sanctification by God's grace, the blessed water is sprinkled throughout the Church, on the congregation and on each Orthodox Christian individually. It may also be drunk. On the Feast of Theophany and on subsequent days all the faithful, their homes and often their fields, gardens and other possessions are traditionally sprinkled with holy water by the priest or head of the household while the Theophany Dismissal Hymn is sung: "When you, O Lord, Were Baptized in the Jordan". Holy water in small bottles may also be kept in homes near the icons for drinking before breakfast or for blessing of persons or the home on the first day of each month or other special occasions.

The rite of the Blessing of Waters occurs on other occasions. Each Baptism includes the blessing of the water in the baptismal font. Also, a separate service of the Blessing of the Water may be celebrated at any time of the year on occasions such as groundbreaking for a new building, moving into a home or apartment, starting a project or a business, or to bless a farm, flock, boat and the like.

What does it mean to be sanctified by God's grace through the visible sign of water? Part of the prayer of every Blessing of Water, including that of the sacrament of Baptism, expresses the meaning of sanctification through water as follows:

O King, who loves humanity, be present now as You were then (at the Jordan) through the coming of Your Holy Spirit and sanctify this water. (This is repeated three times as the priest makes the sign of the cross over the water.) And confer upon it the grace of redemption, the blessing of the Jordan. Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a forgiveness of sins, A protection against disease, a destruction to demons, inaccessible to evil powers and filled with angelic strength; that all who draw from it and drink of it may have it for the cleansing of their soul and body, for the healing of their passions, for the sanctification of their dwellings, and for every purpose that is fitting.

Preparing Kids for Being Away from Home Part 3

Another important away-from-home event for parents to address with their kids is when they go to their first overnight camp. This can often last for a whole week. Again, it seems as if most parents handle this well; but I offer my comments for those who might be seeking some assistance.

I think the first thing a parent can do to prepare their child for a first camp stay, is to call the Camp Director to get advice about what they encounter with first time campers. First-time kids especially might become homesick and cry for their parents; a few may even say they want to go home. How does the Camp handle these issues when they arise? What advice would the Camp Director give a parent to prepare a first-time child for camp?

There are a couple of common sense things I can also offer. First, get in the habit of letting your child spend a couple of days away from home to stay with a relative that you are comfortable with. Do this a few times before camp as the time draws near. Second, if you have access to a local campground, take your child and camp outdoors for a few days. If that is not available, pitch a tent in the back yard and have your child spend a night or two sleeping in the tent with a sibling or a friend. Make sure adult supervision is close at hand. Finally, speak with your parish priest or other parents in the parish as they may have better suggestions to offer on this topic.

This is a good time to listen to your kids and ask them what they think about going to camp. Let them verbalize any concerns or fears they might have. Help them figure out how they can cope and manage these emotions so that they don't get the best of them.

On this last day of the year, I wish you a Happy New Year.

Christ is born!
The unworthy +Paul

PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING OF HOMES

Before the Priest arrives at your home, here are a few reminders on how to prepare:

- In the main room of the home, usually the kitchen or dining room, have placed on the table a white cloth, a candle and /or an Icon or cross. You may place a small container of Holy Water on the table. (Note: Father will be bringing his own.)
- Make a list of those living in the house including pets and all deceased you want prayed for.
- Turn off all TV's, radios, computers, etc. So as to keep focused on the blessing service.
- Make sure that pets are heeled or restrained so as not to get underfoot while Father goes through the home.
- In some customs, someone (usually a child) takes a candle and leads Father through the house while the rest follow.
- If you have any items to be blessed (Icon, Cross, etc.). Put them on the table where the blessing will take place.
- When the priest arrives, have everyone in the home gather around the table and join in the blessing. PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT.
- Invite friends or neighbors to participate and witness the beauty of this tradition.

NOTE: Remember, the invitation to the priest to come and bless your home is an invitation to ask for the mercy of God upon the household. The sprinkling of the Holy Water is a sign of God's presence in the home as an extension of His Holy House, the Church. It is a time to renew our commitment to God as we begin another year in His mercy and love for mankind.

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

Our life on earth is especially dependent upon water and light. Water covers most of the earth and interacts with the entire cycle of nature to help things grow. In a comparable way light is essential to photosynthesis, the miracle behind everything that is green. It causes creative changes in the atmosphere and on the surface of the earth. Light allows us to appreciate nature's rich colors. And these two elements—water and light—are the chief symbols for the Holy Theophany of our Lord, or the Feasts of Lights, which we celebrate on January 6.

Theophany is one of the most important feasts in the Orthodox Church along with Easter / Pascha, Pentecost and Christmas. Theophany commemorates the event of Jesus' baptism. According to the Gospels, when Jesus came to be baptized heaven opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and God the Father by His heavenly voice gave witness that Jesus was His beloved Son. Jesus' baptism signified not only His divine identity as Son of God but also disclosed the glory of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Thus, along with the themes of the sanctification of the waters, purification from sin and renewal, Theophany also celebrates The revelation of God to the world. "Theophany" means divine manifestation—the manifestation of God to the world as Trinity, the three great Lights of Father, Son, and Spirit, one in essence and glory.

Some of the themes of the Feast of Theophany are expressed through the following hymns:

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, calling You beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed His word as steadfast. O Christ,

our God, Who has appeared and illumined the world: Glory to You! (Theophany Tropar)

Light of Light, Christ our God, God made manifest, has shone upon the world. O people, let us worship Him. (Theophany Hymn of Praises)

The true Light has appeared and bestows enlightenment upon all. Christ Who is above all purity shares baptism with us: He brings sanctification to the water and it becomes a cleansing for souls. The outward event is earthly but the spiritual disclosure is higher than heave: salvation comes through washing, the spirit is given by means of the water, and immersion signifies our ascent to God. How wonderful are Your works, O Lord: Glory to You! (Theophany Hymn of Praises)

The first of the above hymns tells about the revelation of the Holy Trinity at the time of Jesus' baptism. The second hymn proclaims Christ as God, the divine Light which comes from Light, God the Father, and shines upon the world. The third hymn touches on the meaning of baptism which Christ shared with us and which He began as a Christian rite.

