

CHURCH BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH "ST. VLADIMIR", HOUSTON
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THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST January 19



“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. “
(*Matt.3:13-17*)

Troparion

When Thou wast baptized in the Jordan,
O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest;
for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee,
calling Thee His beloved Son.
And the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the certainty of the world.
O Christ our God,
Who hast appeared and hast enlightened the world,
glory be to Thee.



THE FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF THE LORD

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 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).

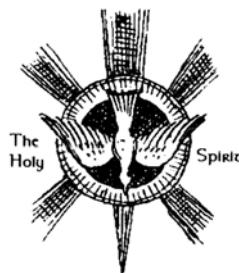
On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Indivisible. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient 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).

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



THE FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD



The celebration of the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River reveals wondrous events:

- The Mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed.
- The waters were blessed by Christ and ceased to be waters of the fall and became waters of renewal (holy water).
- Any demonic influence over water was ended.
- A model of Baptism was established for the followers of Jesus Christ.
- The sin of the old Adam was washed away and buried in the waters.
- St. John the Forerunner was blessed by Christ.

The word Theophany (meaning manifestation of God) comes from the apostolic passage, “God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). Another name for the Feast is Epiphany (meaning manifestation from above), “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). A third name is the “Feast of Lights”, as Christ reveals Himself as the “Light of the World” (John 8:12).



What does Holy Water do?

“The Holy Water performs a two-fold sacramental action:

- 1) It cleanses of evil — it is a means by which we purify ourselves, our homes, or any object, casting out any devil that might be in it, and
- 2) It consecrates to God — having cast out the evil, we dedicate ourselves, our homes, or any object to the exclusive service and glorification of Almighty God.

We promise that our homes will no longer be places of anger and places of sin. Instead, we dedicate them as places of love and as dwellings of those who are honored to be followers of the Holy Orthodox Faith. Thus, to receive the Blessings of the Church upon yourself, your home, or on any of your possessions, and then not to use them for Christ, or moreover, to use them against Christ through any form of evil or sin, is an extreme contradiction of the Blessing itself.”

When we partake of the Holy water of Theophany and the Blessing of Our Homes, we in reality are promising God that during the coming year our families and our homes will be dedicated to Him and to the work of His Holy Church. If we do so, we will receive “the grace of redemption and the blessing of the Jordan.”



A Sermon about Holy Water

By Archbishop John Maximovich of Shanghai and San Francisco

On Theophany, that is, the Day of the Lord's Baptism, every year a great miracle is performed. The Holy Spirit, coming down upon the water, changes its natural properties. It becomes incorrupt, that is it does not spoil, remains transparent and fresh for many years, receives the grace to heal illnesses, to drive away demons and every evil power, to preserve people and their dwellings from every danger, to sanctify various objects whether for church or home use. Therefore Orthodox Christians with reverence drink Holy Water - a great Agiasma (holy thing), as the Greeks call it.

One should always have at home enough Theophany water so that it will last the whole year, and make use of it at every need; in cases of illness, leaving on a journey, whenever one is upset, students when going to examinations. They do well who daily, before eating any kind of food, drink a little Holy Water. It strengthens the powers of our soul - if it is done, of course, with prayer and reverence, and one does not merely expect from it a mechanical result.

Every priest should take care to bless a sufficient quantity of water for his church, so that it will be on hand for the course of the whole year for every need and to be given out to those who ask for it; and parishioners should provide for themselves at Theophany with Holy Water for the whole year and even so that it can be kept for future years.



ON THE POWER OF FREE WILL

No one and not one thing can bring harm to a person, if he does not harm himself; and, conversely, a thousand ways and means to salvation will not help the person who will not avoid sin.

St. Nikon of Optina

FOR CONSIDERATION

On one of the stones in the Church of St. Sophia (Hagia Sophia), Constantinople, the following words were engraved: "Wash your sins, not only your face." Whoever entered this glorious church read this inscription and remembered that the Christian Faith requires of him moral purity: purity of the soul, purity of the heart and purity of the mind. Just as in the heart of man is concentrated the complete spiritual man, this is what the Lord also said, "Blessed are the pure of heart" (St. Matthew 5:8). Total external cleanliness does not help at all in gaining the kingdom of heaven. Oh, if only we would invest as much effort in washing ourselves from sins as we invest daily in washing our faces, then God would truly be seen in our hearts as in a mirror!

TO THINK ABOUT

The three temptations by which Satan tempted the Lord Jesus after His Baptism in the Jordan River:

1. Gluttony: The temptation with bread;
2. Pride: Lifting Him above the Temple;

3. Greed: Offering Him the possession of the entire world.
From January 8th of the Prologue of Ochrid
By Saint Nikolai Velimirovic

FROM “WORDS OF LIFE”

by Archimandrite Sophrony

Our spiritual progress depends first and foremost on our own attitude.

One day, a man who was visiting Mount Athos asked several wise elders the following question: “What is the most important thing in your life?” Each time he was answered like this: “It is divine love; to love God and to love one’s neighbor.” He said: “I don’t have love, either for prayer, or for God, or for other people. What must I do?” And then he decided by himself: “I will act as if I had this love.” Thirty years later, the Holy Spirit gave him the grace of love.

Lesson: God gives His grace to all who actively seek Him with patience.



LESSONS FROM THE FATHERS

The Baptism of the Lord

The Lord came to the Jordan, and was baptized of John not because he was in need of that cleansing, but so that He might fulfill all that was attributable to human nature, which He had assumed, and to show that He had a true body and that he truly was an actual man. He did not want to transgress the law, and so answered: “for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Math. 3:15) It was for this reason that He entered into the waters of Baptism. But in so doing, He gave them incomparably more than He could receive from them, for he was in need of nothing. For with His light He illuminated those very waters, and gave them a certain special power by which those who believe on Him, entering the waters of Baptism, are clothed in this power, and are illuminated by Him.

Holy Hierarch Epiphanius of Cyprus

The waters of Baptism would never have had the ability to cleanse human sins, had they not been blessed by the touch of the Savior’s Body. Immersing Himself in the water, the Savior blessed the waters - the deep, and the source of all springs.

Holy Hierarch Ambrose of Milan

On faith

While still in the body, the soul passes through three ages – youth, maturity, and old age. Likewise, faith passes through three stages – the beginning of faith, success in faith, and perfection. In the first, when the soul begins to believe, it is, in the words of the Gospel, born in Christ. The Apostle John showed us the signs of this new birth, and of the intermediate state and of perfection: “I write unto you, little children...; I write unto you, young men...; I write unto you, fathers... ” (I John 2: 12-14). He was writing not to

physical friends, but to all the faithful, and was revealing to them the three different states through which those moving forward in the spiritual realm go in order to achieve perfection and to be made worthy of complete grace.

St. Anthony the Great

On humble mindedness

Extirpate two thoughts within thyself: do not consider thyself worthy of anything great, and do not think that any other man is much lower than thou in worthiness. Learn humble mindedness beforehand, which the Lord commanded in word and showed forth in deed. Hence, do not expect obedience from others, but be ready for obedience thyself.

Even if thy soul should suffer somewhat from an offense, keep the sorrow within thyself. For it is said: "Within me my heart is troubled" (Psalm 142:4), that is, the passion has not come out, but has been humbled like a wave that has broken up on the shore. Calm thy raging heart. Let thy passions be ashamed at the presence of reason in thee, as playful children are ashamed before a man commanding respect.

Saint Basil the Great



SAINTS OF JANUARY

St. John of Kronstadt (January 2)



“Never confuse the person, the evil that is in him: because an illness, a devilish attack. But the image of God, and this disfigurement.”

formed in the image of God, with evil is but a chance misfortune, the very essence of the person is remains in him despite every

"When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means."

"There is nothing impossible unto those who believe; lively and unshaken faith can accomplish great miracles in the twinkling of an eye. Besides, even without our sincere and firm faith, miracles are accomplished, such as the miracles of the sacraments; for God's Mystery is always accomplished, even though we were incredulous or unbelieving at the time of its celebration. "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3). Our wickedness shall not overpower the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God; our dullness shall not overpower God's wisdom, nor our infirmity God's omnipotence." — My Life in Christ

"Oh, what great happiness and bliss, what exaltation it is to address oneself to the Eternal Father. Always, without fail, value this joy which has been accorded to you by God's infinite grace and do not forget it during your prayers; God, the angels and God's holy men listen to you."

"The enemy of our salvation especially strives to draw our heart and mind away from God when we are about to serve Him, and endeavours to adulterously attach our heart to something irrelevant. Be always, every moment, with God, especially when you pray to Him. If you are inconstant, you will fall away from life, and will cast yourself into sorrow and straitness."

"Do not be despondent when fighting against the incorporeal enemy, but even in the midst of your afflictions and oppression praise the Lord, Who has found you worthy to suffer for Him, by struggling against the subtlety of the serpent, and to be wounded for Him at every hour; for had you not lived piously, and endeavored to become united to God, the enemy would not have attacked and tormented you."

St. Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia - Universal Teacher
(14 January)

Hierarch Basil the Great is one theologians. His influence on far beyond the borders of his To the pen of Saint Basil the Sacred Scripture, a treatise on and rules for monastic life.



of the Church's most remarkable the fortunes of the Church spread homeland and is felt till our days. Great belong commentaries on the Holy Spirit, epistles, sermons

He did very much for the establishment of the order of the Liturgy, and numerous prayers were written by him. The Church reveres him as a fighter for the purity of the faith, a great hierarch and theologian, calling him a "universal teacher". Only on two other saints -John Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian - is such a great honor bestowed. Basil the Great was a man of encyclopedic cast. A philosopher, philologist, orator, jurist,

scientist, archaeologist, who possessed profound knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and medicine - "he was a ship, loaded with as much erudition as human nature can contain", writes his contemporary, Saint Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium.

By his example and sermons, Hierarch Basil the Great promoted the spiritual perfecting of the Christians of his homeland and many sought him out. Men's and women's monasteries were formed, in which Basil the great introduced a mixed form of the monastic life - coenobitic and eremitic - free from extremes. Prayer and contemplation in his monasteries alternated with physical labor, while only such trades were allowed which did not violate the spiritual collectedness and simplicity of the monastic life. Other distinguishing features and even innovations in the monastic way of life, according to the rule of Basil the Great, were broad charitable activity and the education of children of both sexes.

Saint Basil performed the divine service almost daily. He especially cared about the strict fulfillment of the Church's canons, attentively watching so that only the worthy entered the clergy. He would frequently go about his churches, taking care that ecclesiastical discipline not be violated anywhere and eliminating every partiality.

Saint Basil the Great was an indefatigable preacher of the revival of social justice in the society contemporary to him. The hierarch gave a firm organization to Church philanthropy, being an opponent of private philanthropy and the imprudent pity that is ready to help every beggar indiscriminately. His appeal to found monastic communities was simultaneously an appeal to the feeling of men's mutual brotherly responsibility for each another. Man, according to the teaching of Basil the Great, can realize the will of God for himself only in the event he does not separate his fate from the fate of other men. Monasticism, as Basil the Great thought, is the way for the elect. But the very ideals of monasticism communicate to all Christians what must be the ideals set down by the Gospel as the basis of each man's life. Every indifference to the fate of other men, every kind of individualism were for Basil the Great not only profoundly depraved, but also self-destructive by their very nature. He used all of his personal means and all the revenues of his church for the benefit of the poor; in each district of his expansive metropolia, the hierarch founded almshouses; in Caesarea - an inn and a hospice, which by their scale seemed to be an entire little town. He especially cared about a more just allocation of taxes between lands and about freeing the clergy, monasteries and almshouses from taxes.

Our Holy Father Seraphim of Sarov

(January 15)

The prayer rule of St. Seraphim of Sarov



St. Seraphim of Sarov taught everyone the following rule of prayer:

“Let any Christian, upon arising from sleep stand before the holy icons, and read the Lord’s Prayer “Our Father” thrice, in honor of the Most-holy Trinity, then the hymn to the Theotokos “O Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice...” three times as well, and finally, the Symbol of Our Faith once. Having completed this rule, let each one attend to the tasks to which he was appointed or to which he is called.

“During work at home or while traveling somewhere, let him quietly read “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” If there are others in his vicinity while he is working, let him silently repeat “Lord have mercy,” until supper.

“After supper, upon completing his tasks, let him quietly read “Most Holy Theotokos, save me a sinner,” and let him repeat this until falling asleep.

“Going to bed, let any Christian again read the above-mentioned morning rule. Thereafter, let him go to sleep, having protected himself with the sign of the Cross.” Fr. Seraphim said “Keeping this rule, it is possible, to reach Christian perfection, for the three prayers indicated are the foundation of Christianity. The first, as the payer given [to us] by Christ Himself, is the model for all prayers. The second was brought from Heaven by the Archangel to greet the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Our Lord. The Symbol [of our faith] contains in brief all of the salvific dogmas of the Christian Faith.”

To those who for whatever reason could not complete this little rule, Venerable St. Seraphim recommended reading it under whatever circumstance: during lessons, while walking, and even in bed. He based this advice on the words of the Scriptures “whosoever should call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved...”

St John the Baptist (January 20)

John's greatest role during his life Theophany, and because of this times, dedicated the day following day is also connected with an Forerunner. The Evangelist Luke Sebaste, where the great prophet Antioch, his own birthplace. He and taking only one hand, which disappeared during the Turkish commemorated several times during the year, but his greatest observance is on this day, January 7th. Among the Gospel-figures surrounding the Savior, the person of John the Baptist holds a very special place, by the manner of his birth in this world and of his



was enacted on the clay of the the Church has, from the earliest that feast to his memory. This event involving the hand of the desired to take John's body from had been beheaded by Herod, to succeeded, though, in acquiring was kept in Antioch till the tenth Constantinople, whence it occupation. St John is

earthly life, by his role of baptizer of men to repentance and his baptism of the Messiah, and, lastly, by the tragic manner of his departure from this world. He was of such moral purity that he indeed deserved the name 'angel', as he was named in the Scriptures, rather than being thought of as just a mortal man. John differs from all the other prophets in that he had the joy of showing forth to the world the One Whom he had foretold. About the hand of St John: it is related that each year, on his feast-day, the archbishop would bring it out before the people. Sometimes the hand appeared open, and sometimes clenched. In the first case it indicated that it would be a fertile year, and in the second that it would be a year of famine. (*The word 'messenger' is, in Greek, 'angelos'. See Malachi 3:1, Matt. 11-10-Tr.)

St. Theophan the Recluse
(January 23)

St. Theophan the Recluse on development of children's spirituality



St. Theophan recommends using this means (i.e. spirituality) as early as possible, while the children are still in the cradle. It was his deep conviction that the parents' piety and religiosity were the best and irreplaceable means to have influence upon a child. A child's frequent communion of the Holy Gifts, being brought to church, being touched to the Holy Cross, to the Gospel, to Icons, being sprinkled with Holy Water, being censed with incense, receiving the priest's blessing, etc., are all part of a salvific atmosphere that surrounds the child and in a marvelous manner warms and nurtures his grace-filled life. However, all of that spiritual atmosphere can seem weak and false if at the same time the parents themselves do not have a spirit of piety. With that spirit, parents can exert a beneficial influence on the spirit of the child, who, in the first months and even years of his life is not yet moving, so to speak.

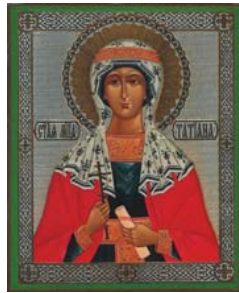
Parents have a direct effect upon their child's soul through the heart. The Holy Hierarch states that the best external channel is the glance. While the soul remains hidden from the other senses, the eye opens it to another's glance - a point at which two souls meet. May the souls of the mother and father enter through that opening, into the soul of the little child with holy feelings. All of this together will have a beneficial influence on forming the child's character, raising up a Christian spirit.

Holy Hierarch Theophan the Recluse says moreover that, having begun such organizing from the cradle, we should continue it throughout the child's upbringing - in infancy and throughout his youth. The church, spirituality, and the Holy Mysteries, are like a tent for children, a tabernacle under which they should always be. Moreover, all other means of upbringing can be and are successfully replaced with this alone. In antiquity, this is largely how people were brought up. As the child grows, abilities of body, soul and spirit, beginning with the lowest and culminating with the higher ones, begin to appear and

make themselves known. As a result, parents and educators assume the responsibility for watching over their development and direction. By the way, it is not simply observation, but also active involvement on their part. The awakening of abilities, together with their attendant needs, begins with the physical: nourishment, movement, and neural sensation or motor action. Holy Hierarch Theophan considered these needs not unimportant for life in general, and also for moral life, for the body, as a rule is the seat of the passions. The Holy Hierarch states that it follows that it is essential to set appropriate limits, and to establish and strengthen good habits, so that later fewer disturbances might ensue.

The Holy Martyr Tatiana of Rome (January 25)

She was a Christian, of the Church. After the death of Emperor Alexander came to the Mammaca, was a Christian, but and hesitant about his faith; an expressed by his keeping statues both Abraham and Orpheus, in took it into their own hands to his orders.



an eminent family, a deaconess in the Emperor Heliogabalus, the throne in Rome. His mother, Julia the Emperor himself was unsure uncertainty that was clearly of both Christ and Apollo, of his palace. His chief advisors persecute the Christians without

When the virgin Tatiana was led to martyrdom, she prayed for her executioners. And lo, their eyes were opened and they saw four angels around the martyr. Seeing this, eight of them were converted to Christ, for which they were tortured and killed. St Tatiana's martyrdom was long-drawn-out: she was flogged, parts of her flesh were cut off, she was sawn with an iron saw, and then, all disfigured and bleeding, was flung that evening into prison to be brought out on the following day for further torture. But God sent His angel to the prison, to give her courage and heal her wounds. Tatiana, there-fore, appeared before her torturers each morning in perfect health. She was thrown to a lion, but the lion became tame before her and did her no harm. Her hair was shorn, from an idea that occurred to their godless minds that some sorcery might be hidden in it, some magical strength. Finally she was led out, together with her father, and the two were beheaded. In such manner this heroic maiden finished her earthly life in about the year 225, and was crowned with an immortal crown of glory. She had the weak body of a woman, but a manly and valiant spirit.

St. Nina, Equal of the Apostles and the Enlightener of Georgia (January 27)

St. Nina (also Nunia, Nino) was the niece of the Jerusalem Patriarch Juvenal. From childhood she had loved God with all her heart and deeply pitied those who did not believe in Him. Her father for a hermitage and her mother which St. Nina was given to a The nun frequently told of when it was yet a pagan country. strong desire to visit this country inhabitants with the light of the The Mother of God appeared to she would take her to that land. to her, the young Nina indeed quickly gained the love of the the Tsar of Georgia, his wife who then aided Nina in her missionary efforts zealously. In the course of her life, St. Nina traveled throughout Georgia and succeeded in bringing all the people to the Christian faith-- all during the time when the Emperor Diocletian was fearfully persecuting Christians. Hearing of the power of her prayers, many of the ill began to come to her. The Bishop and priests of Constantinople were summoned, and the first Church was built in Georgia, dedicated to the Apostles. Slowly, almost all of Georgia became Christian.



Zebulon, of Cappadocia, left became a deaconess, after pious nun for her education. Georgia (presently Gruzia) These tales instilled in Nina a and to enlighten its Gospels.

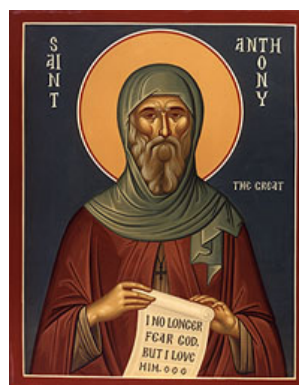
Nina and promised her that When the Lord opened a path went to Georgia, where she people. She baptized Mirian, Nana and their son, Bakar,

St. Nina, desiring neither honor nor fame, withdrew to a mountain and there, in solitude, thanked God for the conversion of the pagans to Christianity. After several years she gave up her solitude and went to Kahetia (Khiva?) where she converted the Tsarina Sofia to Christianity. She rested from her many labors and entered into peace in the Lord in the year 335. On the place of her death, the Tsar Marian erected a Church in honor of the great martyr George, a distant relative of St. Nina. Her grave is in a church in Samtavro. She performed many miracles during her lifetime and after her death.

The finding of Christ's chiton is connected to the memory of St. Nina. During the crucifixion of the Savior, this chiton fell to a Roman soldier by way of casting lots and surfaced in Georgia thereafter. Through God's intervention, St. Nina found this chiton buried by the roots of a cedar tree.

St. Anthony the Great
(January 30)

Our venerable and Anthony the Great was born in Egypt about 254 AD. Also Anthony of the Desert, and a leader among the Desert



God-bearing Father Saint to a wealthy family in Upper known as Anthony of Egypt, Anthony the Anchorite, he was Fathers, who were Christian

monks in the Egyptian desert in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

One day after a teaching on Jesus saying to the people, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21), St. Anthony sold everything he owned, gave the proceeds to the poor, and left the city behind to live in the desert.

Although he held no titles or position, his holiness marked him as one whose wisdom commanded respect. When the Synod of Nicea was convened, he was invited to participate. His eloquent defense of the Orthodox doctrine concerning the person of Jesus Christ was instrumental in weakening the position of Arianism. His witness led to the eventual and complete elimination of Arianism.

He instructed his followers to bury his body in an unmarked, secret grave, lest his body become an object of veneration. The monastic rules of Saint Anthony, the "patriarch" of monastic life, have served as the basis for countless monasteries.

Quote:

"I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, "What can get through from such snares?" Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Humility." "



Prayer for the Sacred Gift of Life

January, 22nd is a regretful anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision of Roe vs. Wade that legalized abortion. Here is a prayer for the Sacred Gift of Life we encourage to the faithful to offer on that day.

“Again we pray that You will grant to the people of this nation the will to do good, to flee from all evil, and to practice all righteousness, making us respectful of life and sharers of Your blessings, caring for one another in mercy and truth.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Again we pray that You will banish all evil from our hearts and wickedness from our laws, enabling us to be servants of Your holy will and performers of Your love.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Again we pray that You will kindle in our hearts the will to care for the needy, to show kindness to the poor, to aid the homeless and to help the helpless.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, Who are in the bosom of the Father, True God, source of life and immortality, Light of Light, who came into the world to enlighten it, You were pleased to be conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary for the salvation of our souls by the power of Your All-Holy Spirit. O Master, Who came that we might have

life more abundantly, we ask You to enlighten the minds and hearts of those blinded to the truth that life begins at conception, and that the unborn in the womb are already adorned with Your image and likeness; enable us to guard, cherish and protect the lives of all those who are unable to care for themselves. For You are the Bestower of Life, bringing each person from non-being into being, sealing each person with divine and infinite love. Be merciful, O Lord, to those who, through ignorance or willfulness, affront Your divine goodness and providence through the evil act of abortion. May they, and all of us, come to the light of Your Truth and glorify You, the Giver of Life, together with your Father and Your All-Holy and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.”



MISCELLANEOUS

Photos from the feast of Nativity:



Special gift!

We are very thankful to Consul General of the Russian Federation in Houston Nikolai E. Babich and his wife Valentina V. Babich for their generous gift of the beautiful books. Church Library and the Sunday School now have new books that are going to be used for enlightenment of our parishioners. May God bless you dear Nikolai E. & Valentina V. and all your family!



Hospital/Nursing Home Visits

If you or your loved one are not able to come to Church to receive Holy Communion and would like a visit, please contact Father Lubomir at (281) - 580 - 4374 to set up an appointment.

Thank You...

...to all those who helped make the pre-Nativity cleanup a success.

...to all who donated flowers for the Nativity, and the time spent decorating. Our Church has never looked so beautiful!

...to all who have donated floral arrangements for the other Feasts of the Church. Flowers remind us of the Garden of Eden, and therefore of our heavenly home, and so their presence is always welcome in the Church.

...to all who worked so hard to beautify our Church and parish house for the Feast of the Nativity and Yolka.

...to all who donated items for the Yolka, held on January 12th, and organized it, especially to our teachers Maria Korshunova and Irena Smakotina for directing our children's program. Nice work, ladies!

...to Elena Kondrakova and her father Boris and mother Alla for their kind donation to our Church of hand-made Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God.

...to Mrs. Nina for her generous donation of new Holy Gospel (Evangelie) for our Church.

E-mail list: If you would like to be added to the e-mail distribution list, please e-mail at marinova@bcm.tmc.edu or call me at 713-790-1336.

If you would like to post notice of your Wedding, Baptism, or if you have any other good news for the Church bulletin, please e-mail your request to marinova@bcm.tmc.edu or call me at 713-790-1336

Information directory: We are currently updating the Parish address list and Information Directory, so, please give your info to our Treasurer Lydia Krawtzova or leave your up-to-date info at the candle stand when you next visit the Church.

Thank you very much for your consideration!

Volunteers needed: We are always looking for new people, who are willing to help with the Church clean-up, caring for flowers, willing to participate in the Church Bulletin work, participating in the organization of Church events, etc...

If interested or for more information on what is involved, please contact the Senior Sister Ekaterina (marinova@bcm.tmc.edu, 713-790-1336). Thank you!

Photos from "Yolka-2009" – next 5 pages.

You can take a look at more photos using the link:

<http://share.shutterstock.com/share/received/welcome.sfly?fid=fd033f32dd465cbf&sid=1EcM2jJs3YsMA>











*Posted by the senior-sister Ekaterina.
(Some sources used from the web)*