



SS. PETER AND PAUL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

"All Things Are Possible to Him Who Believes" (Mark 9:23)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 2025

PARAMON (EVE) OF & SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY OF CHRIST

**MARTYRS THEOPHANTOS THE BISHOP OF
NICOMEDIA AND THEONAS THE FORMER
MAGICIAN; VENERABLE SYNCLETICA OF
ALEXANDRIA; VENERABLE-MARTYR
ROMANOS OF ATHOS**

****Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom****

This prayer should never be absent from you: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Logos of the living God, through the Theotokos and all the Saints, have mercy upon me, Thy sinful and unworthy servant." always say this prayer both with your mouth and with your mind, day and night, wherever you may be, whether eating, walking, working, or sitting. Always meditate on it, as it benefits you a great deal, frees you here from every evil, delivers you there from eternal Hell, and renders you worthy of going to Paradise, our heavenly country.

- St. Cosmas Aitolos

Metropolitan SABA
Primate of the Antiochian
Archdiocese

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GIFT SHOP

Gail Bailey

Great Vespers: Saturday 6:00 pm

Check the Calendar

for possible cancellation or changes

Matins: Sundays 9:20am

Divine Liturgy: Sundays 10:30am

Confessions: By appointment

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ST. IGNATIUS ORDER

Jumana Misleh

•We welcome all our guests and visitors worshipping with us at the Divine Liturgy.

•Please let our ushers know that you are visiting with us today. We would love to stay in touch!

•Please know that Holy Communion is offered to Orthodox Christians, **after** preparing themselves through prayers, fasting, & confession.

•Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to receive blessed bread at the end of the Divine Liturgy & share food with us at coffee hour.

THE SYNAXARION

Today in the Holy Orthodox Church is the Paramon (Eve) of the Theophany (Epiphany) of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. On January 5, we commemorate the holy Martyrs Theopemptos, bishop of Nicomedia, and Theonas the former magician.

Verses

That Theopemptos might die, let him say: Contesting, I die, my head by the sword severed.

Martyr Theonas cried out with the Psalter: They laid me in the lowest pit, as saith David.

On the fifth, Theopemptos left life with a sword's help.

Theopemptos was among the first to suffer martyrdom under Emperor Diocletian, who threatened Theopemptos with death if he did not deny Christ. The courageous bishop responded to the emperor: "It stands written, 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body' (Luke 12:4), 'but cannot kill the soul' (Matthew 10:28)." Theopemptos suffered from hunger and was tortured in various ways. Finally, the emperor summoned the magician Theonas to outwit this Godly man through magic. Theonas dissolved the most potent poison in water and gave it to Theopemptos to drink. Theopemptos traced the sign of the cross over the glass and drank the poison. Theonas, upon seeing that the poison had no effect on Theopemptos, turned to the emperor and shouted, "I, too, am a Christian and bow down before the Crucified One." Theopemptos died by the sword, and Theonas was buried alive. Both entered the Kingdom in 298.

On this day, we also commemorate Venerable Syncretica of Alexandria and Venerable martyr Romanos of Athos. By the intercessions of Thy saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE PARAMON (EVE) OF THEOPHANY IN TONE FOUR

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.

APOLYTIKION OF SS. PETER AND PAUL IN TONE FOUR

O foremost in the ranks of Apostles, and teachers of the world, Peter and Paul, intercede with the Master of all to grant peace unto the world, and to our souls the Great Mercy.

KONTAKION OF THE FOREFEAST OF THEOPHANY IN TONE FOUR

In the running waters of * the Jordan River, * on this day the Lord of all * crieth to John: Be not afraid * and hesitate not to baptize Me, * for I am come to save Adam, the first-formed man.

Commemorations

For the Health of these Parishioners

Samantha Carter	Joyce & Terri	Christo & Mary Christakis
Suad Shammass	Victor, Linda & Family	Hanneh Daoud
Mike & Dorothy Marge	Ibrahim Saah	Vilma Bellone
Michael Shihadi	Joanna Khoury	Sherrie Zachariah & family
Nadim Zarour	Michael Amouri	Nour & Anastasia & Sonny
Qustandi & Nahida Kaibni	Mary Sahouri & Family	Asma Ayoub
Juliana, Metody & family	Yousef & Ghada	Elias, Taylor & Rami
Isabel Threded	Ghassan & Zakieh Jweied	Margo, Sam & Family
Shakeh Kerjilian & Family	Sylvia & Selma Habib	Barbara Zamer & Family
Frank & Barbara Ellis	Grace Saah & Family	Edward & Eleanor Husson
Brian, Caroline & Family	Fadia, Rich & family	Elizabeth Albinger & family
Steve, Jennifer & Family		

DEPARTED

Josephine (Joseph) & Harold Moxley
 Athena & Elias Joseph
 Barbara Joseph Yesbek
 Joe & George Joseph
 Fr. George & Kh Jacky Rados
 Michael & Hanneh Ghanem
 Yaqub, Wadia, Yousef, Afifa, Fehed, Nimer Masarweh
 Baby Michelle
 * Ellen Ayoub
 * Thelma Badwey
 * Selva Hakim Ekrek

Special Prayer this Week for

Timothy Dowse	Elizabeth Carroll	Lilly Cook
Milena Paskaleva & Family	Michael Piechocinski	Gino Michaels & Family
Kera Tomlin & Family	Paul Misleh	Diane & Nader
Richard & Jamie	Antoinette Najmeh	Susan & Joe Sanford
Stephen, Caitlin & Luca Sanford		Brian & Brooke Sanford
Kate (Sanford), Mike, Josephine & Charlotte Procelli		Kevin & Megan Sanford
Renee Shallah	Gene & Elizabeth Mele	Nabil & Caroline Emad
	Joe & Olivet and Family	Kathy Ghanem

Wedding Anniversary

Gene & Elizabeth Mele
 (50th Anniversary)

Coffee Hour & Holy Bread are offered by **Gene & Elizabeth Mele** in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary.

Zalabia (Awamah), a traditional Epiphany dessert, is offered by **Sam & Margo Sahouri Ghanem, and by Joe & Olivet Ghanem** for the health of their families and in memory of their departed family members.

If you want to offer Holy Bread or host Coffee Hour please use the QR Codes on the side to do so.

Coffee Hour Available Dates

- January 12 March 2
- February 2 March 9
- February 9 March 16

Host Coffee Hour



Offer Holy Bread



Coming Up @ Ss. Peter & Paul

Today, January 5th, Teen SOYO monthly meeting, after the Divine Liturgy, in the conference room

SAVE THE DATE

DC-area Orthodox Christian Mission Center Missions Awareness Dinner Saturday, February 22, 2025

Hosted by Our Parish

Featuring Fr Chris Rowe of OCMC; Project Mexico youth construction short-term missions; a video connection with multi-country Missionary Dana Bates from Africa, who works with youth education; and Fr Thomas Manuel, recent Orthodox Christian Mission Center missionary to Guatemala.

Cost: \$45 for older adults; \$25 for those under 25.

St. Raphael's Table

The First Saturday of the Month

Preparing and distributing meals and toiletries to our neighbors in need.

To join in preparation/
distribution
use this QR code



Amazon Wishlist
for Toiletry Bags is
available here.

Dance Through the Decades

Join us for a groovy disco party
celebrating the best music and
dance moves from the 60s-80s!



All are welcome!
Bring a friend or two!

2025 Church Calendars Are Now Available

Pick up from the literature display stands or ask one of the ushers

January Charity Drive

This month's charity drive will raise money for **United Palestinian Appeal (UPA)**, an organization dedicated to empowering Palestinians to improve their health, education, and economic development.

UPA delivers food, water, clothing, medical supplies and services, hygiene kits, and other support, as well as nurturing the means for Palestinian self-development.

For Online Donations, choose "Charity Drive".



1st & 3rd Tuesday Bible Study (8:30 pm/Zoom)

REGISTER HERE



Forever Young!

First Friday of the Month

REGISTER HERE



If you are interested in joining the **Order of St Ignatius**, this will be a great opportunity to be inducted while His Eminence is with us.

www.OrderOfStIgnatius.org

Submit your
interest
in the Order here



Stay Up-to-date By Joining Ss. Peter & Paul WhatsApp Community

An Opportunity to

Stay Connected

Join a Variety of Chat Groups

And Receive Parish

Announcements

Scan

QR Code to Join



For online donations,
use **your phone's
camera** to scan this
code and follow the
link to our secure
donation portal.



THE EPISTLE

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, O my God.

The reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy. (4:5-8)

My child Timothy, be watchful in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the season of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, and I have guarded the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will reward me at that day, and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved His appearing.

THE GOSPEL

The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (1:1-8)

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes He Who is mightier than I, the strap of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Theophany of Our Lord

By Fr. Nicholas Belcher

On January 6, the Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Theophany, the baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the waters of the Jordan. The feast is called Theophany – a "revelation of God" – because the foreshadowing of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament is made manifest. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, descends into the waters, the voice of the Father testifies to His Sonship, and the Holy Spirit confirms the proclamation of the Father through appearing in the likeness of a dove.

There are two important themes that arise from the readings appointed for the Vespers of the feast dealing with water: one is the power God has over the waters and the other is the way God appointed water as a means of purification.

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, the ebbs and flows of the waters were life and death. Flooding was needed to grow their crops, but flooding could also cause destruction. The balance between these two types of flooding meant that the pagan gods of the ancient world needed to show authority over the waters. The first reading from Genesis shows the True God as the One who not only manages flood waters, but Himself "created the heavens and the earth." He separated the land from the waters and marked the boundaries of the seas.

The readings continue to show the mastery God gave His servants over the waters. God had Moses command the Red Sea to be parted, allowing the children of Israel to escape the slavery of Egypt. God instructed Moses to throw a tree of the land of Marah into bitter waters, and the waters were turned sweet. God showed His continued faithfulness by stopping the flow of the Jordan when the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the water, and the children of Israel crossed over with dry feet. Before Elias was parted from Elisha, he struck the Jordan with his mantle so that the two could cross over – again with dry feet.

We also see that God uses water as a means of purification – both from sin and from sickness. Elisha ordered Naaman the Syrian, suffering from leprosy, to immerse himself seven times in the Jordan river to be "made clean." After immersing himself, Naaman's flesh was "restored like the flesh of a child." In the prophecy of Isaiah, the Lord commands: "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil doings from before my eyes." In this case, the purification is not from disease but from evil. The washing is the beginning of repentance – "cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Finally, in the Gospel reading appointed for Vespers, we see the baptism done by the culmination of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist. We hear that he preached a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As crowds came to him, including tax collectors and soldiers, they asked what they should do in response to the cleansing they received in the waters, and St. John preached how they should live their lives in holiness going forward.

These readings set the stage for the glorious mystery that is the Baptism of Our Lord. We learned in the first reading from Genesis that God created all things by His Word, He separated the land from the waters by His Word, and He marked the boundaries of the waters by His Word. Now the very Word of God, who was born in the flesh in the previous feast, descends in the waters to be immersed in the waters. He does not command His servant and prophet, John the Baptist, to strike the waters that He may cross with dry feet, but He commands His servant and prophet to place his hand on His Head to immerse Him into those waters! The Jordan, in acknowledgment of the Master, changes course, but the Master nonetheless wills its waters to cover over Him.

We know that the Lord was pure and without sin, yet He deigned to be washed. He suffered no corruption or disease, yet He deigned to be cleansed. With no need, only to "fulfill all righteousness," did the Lord come to His Baptism. And because of the unity of His Divinity and His Humanity, and because of His Divine Humility, the Lord is not cleansed or purified or washed – the waters themselves become pure, holy, and sanctified by Him! At this moment, the Father's voice reveals Him as the Son and the Spirit confirms it.

So what is revealed in this Theophany? God's self-revelation as the Holy Trinity came not in great miracles or in displays of mighty power but in the Almighty Son and Word of God bowing His Head in humility and obedience out of His love for the Father and for us. We see that our path to purification and sanctification must also come in imitation of Our Lord. We must learn the way of humility, the way of obedience and the way of love. Only then can we partake of the great grace that God pours out on us during this wondrous feast, where the Church declares:

Today the celestials celebrate with the terrestrials, and the terrestrials commune with the celestials. Today the assembly of noble and great-voiced Orthodox rejoiceth. Today the Master cometh to baptism to elevate mankind above. Today the Unbowable boweth to his servant to deliver us from slavery. Today we have bought the kingdom of heaven, for the kingdom of heaven hath no end. Today the land and the sea have divided between them the joy of the world, and the world hath been filled with rejoicing.

Church History - Fourth Century

The First Ecumenical Council

Soon after Emperor Constantine took up residence in Nicomedia, the eastern capital, after his victory over Licinius, he was chagrined to learn of this new controversy that was troubling the whole Eastern Church. So, with the advice of St Hosius, Bishop of Spain (c. 257–357), his theological advisor, he summoned the largest council of bishops ever held up to that point. It opened on May 20, 325, in the city of Nicea, near Nicomedia. Constantine himself gave the opening address. According to tradition, 318 bishops were in attendance, including the famous and greatly beloved Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, and Saint Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithus in Cyprus.

This council, known now as the First Ecumenical Council, decreed that the Logos, the Word and Son of God, is uncreated, ever-existent, and fully divine. He is begotten—that is, “born” or generated—from the Father, and not made or created by Him. He is of one essence (in Greek, homoousios) with the Father. He is true God of true God, the Word of God by Whom all things were made (Jn 1.3; Heb 1.2). It is this uncreated, only-begotten, divine Son of God Who became man from the Virgin Mary as Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

The Council of Nicea also decreed a number of canons (i.e., Church regulations) concerning various issues of order and discipline in the Church. Canon 6 confirmed the jurisdictional authority of Alexandria over Egypt and the neighboring regions of Libya and Pentapolis, “since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also [meaning that the Roman Church, in a corresponding way, had jurisdictional authority only over Rome and its neighboring territory—at that time, most likely central Italy]. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces let the Churches retain their privileges.” This canon clearly ratifies the ancient practice of the Churches in the major cities each having full jurisdictional authority only over the surrounding region.

Concerning the lapsed, Canon 11 offered the possibility of restoration to Eucharistic communion, but only after a period of 12 years of heartfelt contrition, in three stages:

Concerning those who have fallen without compulsion, without the spoiling of their property, without danger or the like, as happened during the tyranny of Licinius, this Synod declares that, though they have deserved no mercy, they shall be dealt with mercifully. Those who were previously communicants, if they heartily repent, shall spend three years among the hearers; for seven years they shall be prostrators; and for two years they shall join the people in prayers, but still as yet without receiving the Eucharistic gifts.

Canon 20 prohibited the practice of penitential kneeling during the Church’s Sunday Liturgy, as well as during the entire Pentecostarion season.

The Nicene Council also established guidelines for determining the date of the annual celebration of Pascha—thus helping to bring the Quartodecimans’ practice to an end.

Finally, this council affirmed once and for all, at least for the Eastern Churches, the propriety of allowing married men to be ordained as deacons, presbyters, and at that time even bishops, and to still have a normal married life. While the Roman Church during the 4th century began trying to force its clergy to be celibate, it was not until the 12th century that it was finally able to enforce this rule.