

THE MESSENGER

ST. DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

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JANUARY 2012

MISSION STATEMENT

To bring all children, youth and young adults closer to Christ and His Church through religious education, fellowship and various other events on a parish and national level.

A Happy & Blessed
New Year to all!

Καλή και
Ευλογημένη
Χρονιά!

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PATRIARCHAL PROCLAMATION FOR CHRISTMAS + BARTHOLOMEW

By the Mercy of God Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome & Ecumenical Patriarch
To the Plenitude of the Church: Grace, Peace and Mercy from our Savior Christ Born in Bethlehem

"Christ is born again and the Angels sing once more:

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among all.'" (Luke 2.14-15)

The angels chant these majestic proclamations and yet the great majority of humanity, although celebrating the feast of Christmas, cannot perceive the significance of the angelic song, instead asking themselves whether God is truly glorified today or why God should even be glorified; where can one discern on earth the peace that is announced, and why should contemporary humanity live with good will? It is because, in reality, most people do not glorify God – either in their deeds or through their words. Many of them doubt the very existence of God and God's presence in their lives. There are also many people that attribute responsibility to God for the unfortunate occurrences in their lives. However, those who grumble against God err profoundly, since evil does not derive from Him. On the contrary, the loving incarnation of the divine Son and Word, together with the consequent events of His Crucifixion and Resurrection, reshape the human person to its former beauty, granting eternal life and the peace that surpasses all understanding, while rendering human beings co-heirs of the heavenly kingdom. This act of divine condescension, though embracing the ultimate humiliation, is in itself capable of glorifying humanity. Thus, even if many people fail to glorify God in their hearts, nevertheless glory is rendered – by all creation and all things that take place among humans – unto Him who dwells in the highest. We too, then, gratefully cry out with the Angels, "Glory to God in the highest," for the immensity of His works and the incomprehensibility of His love for us.

People also query the second angelic proclamation: "And on earth peace." How can we speak of peace on earth when almost half of the planet finds itself either in the act of or in preparation for war? The sweet tone of the angelic proclamation regarding "peace on earth" is of course primarily a divine pledge that, if people adhere to the way indicated by the new-born Child, they will acquire internal peace and peaceful coexistence. But, alas, most people are drawn by the cymbals of war, ignoring the pledge for peace on earth. We are not referring here to those who passionately support the use of weapons, but especially to those who transform gentle competition to unequal conflict, seeking the annihilation of any opposition. In this respect, war is experienced as reality among members of rival social groups and parties of all kinds – whether racial, political, partisan, financial, ideological, religious, athletic or any other kind, where the intense mindset of members is converted into militant rather than peaceful. However, this does not refute the truth proclaimed by the Angels, that – through the Nativity of Christ and the acceptance of His teachings – peace will indeed prevail on earth. Christ came bearing peace; and if His peace does not prevail in the world, then responsibility lies with those who fail to accept and embrace this peace, not with the God who grants it. Since this is the stance of contemporary humanity in light of the peace offered by God, it is hardly surprising that good will is rare among people. The good intention of God toward humanity is assured, just as the favorable consequences of divine love are in principle apparent for all humans and particularly tangible for all those who accept the angelic proclamations in practice. By contrast, for those who reject these proclamations and are given to exploiting and abusing others, the consequences are experienced as a crisis of stress, of economy and meaning, and finally as existential uncertainty.

All the proclamations of the Angels during the birth of the Lord are realities that exist and are experienced today in fullness by those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Divine-Human Savior of the world. Let us begin from this year to live Christmas in a way that pleases God, the giver of all good things, so that we might experience in our hearts the transcendent peace and the loving good will of God toward us. Let us render ourselves as loving human beings in our relationship to God and other people, becoming sharing persons rather than selfish individuals. Let us remove the masks that estrange and divide us from God and His human image, our fellow human being. And let us fulfill our destiny in the likeness of God by practicing our faith in Him. Let us, too, proclaim the angelic song to humankind, which is suffering terribly and cannot discover Peace and Good Will through its conventional ways. The only way of overcoming war and all forms of crisis, such as the financial one that plagues our world, is our Lord Jesus Christ, who assured us that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Therefore, we glorify God in the highest and Jesus Christ who condescended to dwell among us. And we proclaim with the Angels that Peace is accessible and truly exists on earth and within our hearts because we have been reconciled to God through His good will to assume flesh by His birth in the manger. So let us experience the joy of the Nativity of Jesus Christ and the foretaste of all the benefits announced by the threefold proclamation of the Angels. Amen.

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople, Fervent supplicant for all before God



Christmas Pageant 2011

On **Sunday, December 4th**, our Sunday School had its **annual Christmas Pageant**. After the Divine Liturgy, Sunday School students sang songs, read poems and presented a tableau play. After the final presentation, both Fr. Konstantinos Pavlidis and Mr. Basile Polidoulis (Principal of our Sunday School) congratulated: the students, for an excellent Pageant; the teachers of the Sunday School, for their dedication and commitment to our program; and the parents, guardians and grandparents, for helping guide their children and grandchildren in the ways of the Lord. At the end of the event, Santa paid a visit and gave small gifts to all the students. Thanks to all the teachers who prepared their students for the Pageant—especially to Mr. Bill Papagiannis, the Master of Ceremonies. The following **Sunday, December 11th**, the Sunday School held its annual **Christmas Youth Retreat**, where students learned about the upcoming Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ through video presentations, discussions and crafts.

Both events were a perfect way to usher in the Christmas holidays and learn about the True Reason for the Season!

Sunday School classes will begin again on **Sunday, January 8th, 2012**. Please make sure that you are at Church no later than 10:30 a.m. for the Divine Liturgy and the sermon. Καλή Χρονιά!



A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER (FROM THE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT)

O Christ, our God, accept from those who call upon You with all their heart the spiritual sacrifice without the shedding of blood as a sacrifice of praise and true worship. You are the Lamb and Son of God who bears the sins of the world; the blameless calf who does not accept the yoke of sin and who freely sacrificed Yourself for us. You are broken but not divided. You sanctify those who partake of you. In remembrance of Your voluntary passion and life-giving resurrection on the third day, You have made us partakers of Your ineffable and heavenly and awesome mysteries of Your holy Body and precious Blood. Preserve us, Your servants, those who minister, our leaders, the armed forces, and all Your people, in Your holiness. Grant that we may meditate upon Your righteousness at all times and in every season. Guide us and our actions so that we may do what is pleasing to You, and may You find us worthy to stand at Your right hand when

You return to judge the living and the dead. Deliver our brothers and sisters who are in captivity, visit those who are sick, protect those who are in danger at sea, and give rest to the souls of all those who have fallen asleep in the hope of the eternal life where the light of Your face shines. Hear the petitions of all those who beseech You for Your help. For You are the giver of all good things, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever. Amen.



CELEBRATE THEOPHANY WITH US!

As we enter the New Year, the Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany, celebrated on January 6th) is one of the greatest feasts of the Orthodox Church. Learn more about this great feast of the Church clicking on the following links:

- **Mystagogy** (an Orthodox blog rich with information about the faith) has a special [page](#) on Theophany
- The **Archdiocese of America** has a [Listen-Learn-Share Special](#) from the Archdiocese of America has the Biblical story, the hymns of the feast, articles about the feast, along with *Iconograms* (Orthodox e-cards).
- The site [OrthodoxWiki](#) has an article dedicated to the feast of Theophany.
- [Information](#) about Theophany can also be found on the site of *the Orthodox Church in America* (OCA.org).
- [The Preacher's Institute](#) has a special on Theophany, with various homilies from the Fathers of the Church.
- *iEcclesia Orthodox Podcast* has episodes on St. John the Baptist in its [Archives](#) section.
- Finally, visit our Sunday School's website — [LivingOrthodoxy.com](#) — for information about the Feast!



Where the
Good News Is!



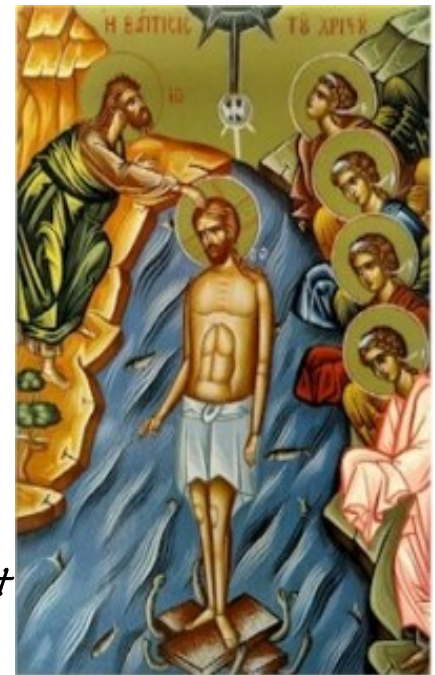
LivingOrthodoxy

Schedule of Divine Services for Theophany 2012

Sunday, January 1st:	Circumcision of our Lord in the flesh, St. Basil the Great	
	Matins and Divine Liturgy	8:45 a.m. — 12:00 noon.
Thursday, January 5th	Forefeast of Theophany	
	Liturgy & Great Agiasmos	8:30 — 10:45 a.m.
Friday, January 6th	HOLY THEOPHANY	
	Matins, Liturgy & Great Agiasmos	8:30 — 11:15 a.m.
Saturday, January 7th	St. John the Forerunner	
	Matins and Divine Liturgy	8:30 — 10:15 a.m.
Sunday, January 8th	Sunday after Epiphany, St. George the Chozebite	
	Matins and Divine Liturgy	8:45 a.m. — 12:00 noon.
	** Sunday School resumes today	

ΑΓΙΑΣΜΟΙ 2012—HOUSE BLESSINGS 2012

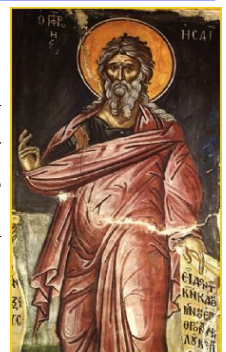
If you would like Fr. Pavlidis to bless your home after the feast of Theophany, please call the Church Office at 416-425-2485.



WHAT DOES THE PROPHET ISAIAH SAY... ABOUT THEOPHANY?

Thus says the Lord: Draw out water with gladness from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day, Sing to the Lord and cry out his name. Proclaim among the Nations his glorious deeds, remind them that his name has been exalted. Sing to the name of the Lord, for he has done great things. Proclaim these in all the earth. Exult and be glad, you that dwell in Sion, because the Holy One of Israel has been exalted in the midst of her.

~ Isaiah 12:3-6 (Prophecy Reading of the Great Agiasmos)





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STDEMETRIOS.TORONTO

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The third Greek Orthodox Church in Toronto, St. Demetrios Church was founded in 1962. Since then, our Church has been the spiritual home of thousands of Orthodox faithful from Toronto and vicinity. Our Church is a constituent member of the Greek Community of Toronto [www.greekcommunity.org] and under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (Canada) [www.gometropolis.org]. The Religious Education programs have been attended by many children, youth and young adults. Our tireless staff works to promote the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Parish Priest

Rev. Fr. Konstantinos Pavlidis

Religious Education Director

Mr. Basile Polidoulis

Young Adult League Leaders

Mrs. Vicki Vokas, Mr. Niko Sotiropoulos

Parish Council President

Mr. Argyrios Haros

Philoptochos President

Mrs. Theodora Koutsoubou

Greek Bible Study

Mr. Basile Polidoulis

Re-Catechism

Mrs. Fotini Kapsalis

(English Orthodox

Mr. John Kapsalis

Discussion Group)

Mr. Chrysostom Makropoulos

Mr. Tim Prattas

RE-CATECHISM THE ORTHODOX FAMILY 6

Where?

St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church (30 Thorncliffe Park Dr.)

Learn about the Orthodox Family during our sessions:

Old game, new tricks:
Parenting in the 21st century
~ Tuesday, January 24th

Illness in the family:
Coping in difficult circumstances
~ Tuesday, February 7th

Keeping the balance:
The unity of Bioethics & Faith
~ Tuesday, February 21st

Obsession Control:
Dealing with Addictions
~ Tuesday, March 6th

Saintly Families:
Examples for parents & kids today
~ Tuesday, March 20th



*** Every Session begins at 7:00 p.m. ***

Come & Join Us!