

From the Fathers (and others):

The fire of God is hidden in the time of captivity, during which sin reigns, but in the time of liberty it is brought forth. And though it is changed into the appearance of the water (in baptism), yet it preserves its nature as fire so as to consume the sacrifice. Do not wonder when you read that God the Father said: 'I am a consuming fire' (Dt. 4:24). And again: 'They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water' (Jer. 2:13). The Lord Jesus, too, like a fire inflamed the hearts of those who heard Him, and like a fount of waters cooled them. For He Himself said that He came to send fire on the earth (cf. Lk. 12:49) and to supply a draught of living waters to those who thirst (cf. Jn. 7:37-38).

- *St. Ambrose*

... if we are ashamed to imitate our Lord's sufferings, which He endured for us, and to suffer as He suffered, it is obvious that we shall not become partakers with Him in His glory. If that is true of us, we shall be believers in word only, not in deed. When deeds are absent, our faith is dead.

- *St. Symeon the New Theologian*

We, therefore, who have been called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, neither by our wisdom or understanding or piety, nor by the works we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by the faith by which almighty God has justified all men from the beginning... What then shall we do, brethren? Shall we cease from good works, and shall we put an end to love? May the Master forbid that such should ever happen among us; rather, let us be eager to perform every good work earnestly and willingly.

- *Saint Clement of Rome*

...men having learned to contrive evil, which is no reality in itself, in like manner feigned for themselves as gods beings that had no real existence.

- *St. Athanasius*

If the grace of God doesn't enlighten man, though you say many words, they won't be beneficial. The person listens to you for a moment, but soon after returns to that which holds him captive. If, however, grace works immediately, together with your words, then a change is effected at that moment, corresponding to the person's predisposition. And from that moment on, his life is changed. This happens with those who haven't hardened their hearing and conscience.

- *Elder Joseph the Hesychast*

The concept of rights is worldly reasoning. The more worldly the person, the more rights he thinks he should have; the more spiritual the person, the fewer rights he thinks he deserves.

- *St. Paisios the Athonite*

St. John Orthodox Church

A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America



~ December 31st, 2023 ~

***Sunday before the Theophany of Christ
which falls on the Leave-Taking of the Nativity of Christ
Commemoration of Venerable Melania the Younger of Rome***

ST. JOHN ORTHODOX CHURCH
1663 TUTWILER AVENUE
MEMPHIS, TN 38107
(901) 274-4119
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His Eminence Metropolitan SABA
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America

His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS
Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast

V. Rev. Fr. Philip Rogers, Pastor

V. Rev. Fr. Basil Cushman, Associate Pastor

V. Rev. Fr. John Troy Mashburn, Jr., Pastor Emeritus

V. Rev. Fr. Donald John Berge, Attached

GREAT VESPERS
Saturday, 6:00 p.m.

ORTHROS
Sunday, 9:00 a.m.

DIVINE LITURGY
Sunday, 10:00 a.m.

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
“...the Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch!”
Acts 11:26

Sunday before the Theophany of Christ

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

Welcome to all those visiting St. John Orthodox Church. We are honored by your presence. It is our sincere desire that your participation today in the Divine Liturgy will draw you closer to Christ and His Church.

If you are from a non-Orthodox background, you may see new things such as icons, incense, the sign of the cross, the veneration of saints, and a great deal of standing. These can be perplexing to the uninitiated eye. Rest assured that everything we do has a solid biblical foundation and a long history among Christian people. Please feel free to participate where you feel comfortable and feel equally as free only to observe when you prefer.

The Orthodox Church understands the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, to be – among other things – the paramount expression of Christian unity. While it is our deepest hope that Christendom will one day fulfill Christ's desire for true unity among all those who claim His name (John 17:21), the unfortunate reality of our day is that the various segments of Christendom are not unified with the historic Orthodox faith. *Since participation in the Eucharist expresses a unity with all the dogma and practice of the Orthodox Church, non-Orthodox guests do not receive Holy Communion.* The Holy Eucharist is reserved for those members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves by prayer, fasting, and recent confession. All visitors and unprepared Orthodox are invited to partake of the blessed bread as they come forward to venerate the cross at the end of the Liturgy. Thank you for your understanding.

ST. JOHN CALENDAR

December 31 – January 7
(Theophany Fast Friday, January 5)

- Sunday** - Orthros, 9:00 am
- Divine Liturgy, 10:00 am
- Monday** - First Hour, 6:45 am
- **Office Closed**
- Tuesday** - Third Hour, 9:00 am
- Men's Lunch, 12:00 pm
- Orthodoxy 101, 7:00 pm
- **Office Closed**
- Wednesday** - Third Hour, 9:00 am
- Women's Teaching, 10:00 am ***In Person**
- Vespers, 6:00 pm
- Bible Study, 7:00 pm
- Thursday** - Third Hour, 9:00 am
- Friday** - **Paramon of Theophany (Fasting)**
- Royal Hours, 9:00 am
- Vespers with the Great Blessing of the Waters, 5:30 pm
- Saturday** - Festal Orthros for Theophany, 8:30 am
- Baptismal Divine Liturgy, 9:30 am
- Blessing of the Mississippi River, 12:00 pm
- BBQ Lunch, 1:00 pm
- Ninth Hour & Vespers, 5:50 pm
- Sunday** - Orthros, 9:00 am
- Divine Liturgy, 10:00 am

Today's Churching – Dec. 31:
Ashley and Gabriel Powell

Today's Enrollments – Dec. 31:
Kyle, Jane, Isla and Lachlan
Esposito

Upcoming Baptism – Jan. 6:
Marcella McGee

Birthdays, Anniversaries, Nameday

Sunday, 12/31

Birthday: Dustin Finch, Mikael Santana
King David: David Damon, David McGee,
David Twombly
St. Joseph the Betrothed: J. Morgan Harter,
Deon Crum, Jarrett Wilson

Monday, 1/1

St. Basil the Great: Fr. Basil,
Bill Harter, Bill Stanek, Adam Sanderlin

Tuesday, 1/2

Birthday: Finn Shull
St. Juliana of Lazarevo: Giuliana Yzaguirre,
Claire van Drimmelen
St. Seraphim: Janna Knight, Karen Wells

Wednesday, 1/3

St. Genevieve of Paris: Clover Smith
Anniversary: Paul & Deborah Finley

Thursday, 1/4

Birthday: Sophia Garrison

Friday, 1/5

Birthday: Kendall Ichniowski,
Carlos Yzaguirre

Saturday, 1/6

Birthday: John Brownlow

Commemorations

December 31: Venerable Melania the younger of Rome; Hieromartyr Zotikos the friend of orphans; Venerable Theophylact of Ochrid.

January 1: The Circumcision in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ. Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia; New-martyr Peter of the Peloponnesos.

January 2: Sylvester, Pope of Rome; Cosmas, archbishop of Constantinople; Hieromartyr Theogenes of Parium; Martyrs Sergios and Theopistos; New-martyr Zorzis; Venerable Theodote and Neilos; Repose of Venerable Seraphim of Sarov; Righteous Juliana the Merciful, of Lazarevsk.

January 3: Martyr Gordios of Cappadocia; Prophet Malachi; Venerable Thomaidos; Venerable Genevieve of Paris.

January 4: The synaxis of the Seventy Holy Apostles; Venerable Theoktistos of Sicily; Venerable-martyrs Euthymios and his twelve companions of Vatopedi monastery on Athos; Venerable-martyr Onouphrios the deacon of Hilandar monastery on Athos; Eustathios, archbishop of Serbia.

January 5: Martyrs Theopemptos the bishop of Nicomedia and Theonas; Venerable Syncletica of Alexandria; Venerable-martyr Romanos of Athos.

January 6: The Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ. Venerable Makarios Makris of Vatopedi monastery on Athos and Pantocratoros monastery in Constantinople.

January 7: The synaxis of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; Julian the deacon; Hieromartyr Romanos; New-martyr Athanasios of Attalia; Venerable Brannock of Braunton.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sunday	2 Timothy	4:5-8	Mark	1:1-8
Monday	Colossians	2:8-12	Luke	2:20-21, 40-52
Tuesday	Hebrews	5:4-10	John	3:1-15
Wednesday	Acts	10:44-48; 11:1-10	John	1:18-28
Thursday	1 Corinthians	4:9-16	John	1:18-28
Friday	1 Corinthians	9:19-27	Luke	3:1-18
Saturday	Titus	2:11-14; 3:4-7	Matthew	3:13-17
Sunday	Acts	19:1-8	John	1:29-34

Remember in Your Prayers

Our catechumens: Jeff Bennett; Ben Haag; Thomas & Christy Potts; Eric Iverson; Andrew Potts; Brian, Danielle, Luree, John, & River Pfeister; Billy & Stacey Murray; Leighann Pompa; John & Lisa Weaver; Hannah Gibson; Richard & Lucas Luper; Michael Pritchett; Taylor Tawbush

Prayer Requests: Mother Raphaela; Cathy & Adam van Drimmelen & family (Cathy's mother, Wilma West, fell asleep in the Lord on Nov. 13); Ken Alvis (Dianna Hildebrand's brother); Mary Elliott & family; Mike & Joyce Grossman; Chris Hodges; Mickey Hodges; St. Nicholas Orthodox Church; St. Paul Orthodox Mission; Samuel Brownlow; Elizabeth Turner (Jack's mother); Aleksandra Klimkowski & family; Emma & Katelyn Coe; Janan Heisig & family; Shawn McClenny (Miriam Redmond's brother-in-law); Kimberly Castrillon (Dianna Hildebrand's niece); Charles Pugh (Madeleine Boiles's brother); the Bowick family; those suffering in the Middle East, most especially the Christians.

Expecting: Katherine Verbist, Marija Pavlovic, Ioana Rustom, Heather Hetrick

Diocesan Seminarian: Caleb McGee



ST. JOHN COMMUNITY



Welcome Fr. Gregory and Kh. Pamela Rogers

Fr. Philip's parents have been here visiting for the week. Fr. Gregory is the pastor of both St. Catherine in Aiken, SC and St. Barnabas in Lexington, SC. Welcome!

Theophany & MS River Blessing – Our annual Blessing of the Mississippi will be held this coming Saturday, January 6th at 12:00 p.m. Lunch, catered by Central BBQ, will be provided in St. Raphael Hall following the blessing.

Theophany House Blessings – It is time to schedule your House Blessing! Please sign up on the printed sheets in the parish hall for the times and days which are most convenient for your family to have your home blessed by one of our priests. Fr. Philip will follow up with you with a specific date and time.

Church School Schedule – Church school will resume next Sunday on January 7!

Orthodoxy 101 will next meet on Tuesday, January 2nd, at 7pm. The topic will be *Who Is Mary?* All are welcome to attend either in person or via Zoom.

Medical Professionals Meeting – By the blessing and direction of Metropolitan SABA, a new fellowship is forming: The North American Antiochian Orthodox Medical Professionals. The first meeting of the local chapter will be on Sunday, January 21 following the Divine Liturgy in the library in order to discuss the goals and interests of the group. There will be a national Zoom meeting in March with Dr. Daniel Hinshaw as the keynote speaker. Box lunches will be served at our local meeting. To ensure there is enough, please RSVP on the sign-up link in the parish emails. For more information, you can contact Dr. Nawar Mansour.

Parish Council Update – The year is winding down! Thank you for your support over the course of this year!! As the year winds down, now is the time to make those end of the year donations. The next meeting of the council will be Tuesday, January 9. May God bless us as we continue to be good stewards of our Parish Resources!!

Office Closed

Please note that the office will be closed this week on Monday and Tuesday for the holiday. Thank you and may you have a safe and happy New Year!

Photos on Bulletin Board – Is your family pictured on the bulletin board leading into St. Raphael Hall? If not, please see Mr. Trent Terry! He will take your picture and add you to our photos. There are so many new people and it is great to have a tool to put a name to a face.

2024 Calendars

2024 calendars have arrived and can be found in the bookstore and hall.

Daily Lives, Miracles, and Wisdom of the Saints & Fasting Calendar (spiral bound) is \$20.

Icon Wall Calendars are free, but please limit to one copy per family.

St. John Youth

Today:

Sunday, 12/31 -

No Youth Group

Looking Ahead:

Saturday, 1/6 -

Sunday, 1/7 -

Feast of Theophany & Blessing of the MS River

Christmas Party, 5-8pm (Location TBD)

Christmas Potluck for all of our youth group families, with a White Elephant gift exchange game for youth group members. (Bring a wrapped gift around \$10 in value.)

Women of St. John Calendar

1/3 (Wed.) AWSJ Teaching, 10am – Women’s Teaching will meet in person at the church this week to discuss *A Voice for Our Time* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. If your schedule allows, bring a sack lunch or snack and join us for social time & fellowship after the meeting.

1/8 (Mon.) AWSJ Book Club, 7pm – The Women’s Book Club will resume for 2024 on Monday, Jan. 8 at Kh. Pamela Mashburn’s home at 7pm. We will be discussing *Pearl of Great Price* by Sergei Hackel. All are welcome to join, even if you have not read the book! Please RSVP to Kh. Pamela if you are planning to attend. We would love to see you! Bring a snack to share!

1/12 (Fri.) AWSJ Knitting Circle, 6pm – Knitting Circle will resume for 2024 on Friday, Jan. 12 at 6pm at Miriam Redmond’s home. Bring your projects (any handwork, not just knitting!) and (if you want to contribute) a snack to share! All women are welcome regardless of whether you do any handwork or not. We look forward to seeing you, even if just to chat!

Third Hour Prayer & Fellowship (Fridays), 9am – Each Friday a group of moms and kids are gathering at the church to attend Third Hour prayers followed by a time of fellowship. Any and all are welcome to join us! Please reach out to Heather Hetrick with any questions.

LIBRARY LINES

St. Zoticus (12/31), a wealthy Roman, moved to Constantinople when the emperor Constantine transferred the capital of the empire. He was ordained as a priest and used his money to care for orphans and the poor in his own house. With support from the emperor, he established a shelter for lepers and the homeless. When Constantine died, the new emperor coveted the money his father gave Zoticus and had him tortured and killed. See his story in *Saint Zoticus, Guardian of Orphans* (KID STS ZOT).

Tuesday we commemorate the repose of St. Seraphim of Sarov (1/2). During his life he stated that his death would be revealed by a fire. On January 2, his attendant smelled smoke coming from his cell. Several monks pushed open the door and saw his books smoldering. They found the saint kneeling in front of an icon of the Theotokos with his arms crossed over his chest. Read more about him in *Celebration in Sarov: Photographs ...* (HIS SER), *Flame in the Snow* (HAG SER DEB) and *St. Seraphim’s Beatitudes* (KID STS SER).

We begin the new year by honoring a heroine for young women in our Church. Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo (1/2) lived a devout childhood. After her parents’ death she remained steadfast in the Faith and in her love and care for the poor, even though her guardians mocked her. Her pious life drew the attention of the village owner, and they married. Her in-laws saw a treasure in her, and young Juliana was given charge of their household. She spent her life in prayer and caring for the poor and sick. After the death of two of her six children she longed for the monastic life but remained in the world to care for her family and all who crossed her path. One of her sons wrote about her life of selfless love, asceticism and visits from St. Nicholas. She was buried in 1604 next to her husband and daughter in the village church. She is the patron of several at St. John, and her icon is in the nave above the Myrrh-bearing women. Read more about her in *Ascetic Lives of Mothers: a Prayer Book for Orthodox Moms* (SPR FAM BOY) and *101 Orthodox Saints* (KID STS WRI).

Wednesday we remember the Prophet Malachi (1/3), known as the “seal of the prophets” because he is the last of the Old Testament prophets. He had the appearance of an angel, and one was his companion and reiterated his prophecies. It is thought by some that he lived during the lifetimes of Ezra and Nehemiah. He confronted problems of intermarriage between Jews and pagans and of infidelity with their Hebrew wives. He saw these and the negligent offering of tithes as signs of weakening devotion to family and God. He prophesied the coming of the Forerunner and Christ, and also the Last Judgment. The *Book of Malachi* was written about 440 B.C.

Tuesday of last week we commemorated the synaxis (a day after a great feast on which a person related to the events is honored) of the Theotokos (12/26). This Thursday our synaxis (1/4) honors the Seventy, men who Christ appointed to travel two by two to the cities He would visit. Some of them, Sts. Mark and Luke the Evangelists, Timothy, Barnabas and Prochorus, are familiar to us; most are not. They all have their own feast days, but the Church commemorates them all together Thursday. Read more about them in *Meet the Evangelists* (KID STS KHO) and *Co-workers for the Gospel* (KID STS SPI).

Theophany (1/6) was anciently celebrated as the most important feast day besides Pascha. It even predates Christmas as a major feast. Read about its significance and history as a feast in the following St. John Library books: *Christ in the Old Testament* (KID BIB HOP), *Orthodox Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary* (CAT CAL WYB), *Theophany of our Lord* (KID CHU ELA) and *Sermons on the Major Holy Days of the Orthodox Church* (CAT CAL CON).