

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES

January 3 – January 10

Mon. Jan. 4 – 9:30am: “Akathist to the Mother of God, Nurturer of Children” followed by Knitting Group from 10:00am-Noon

Tue. Jan. 5 – 10:00am: Royal Hours for Theophany (1.5 hours)

Tue. Jan. 5 – 6:00pm: Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great for Theophany, *with the blessing of the waters done after communion*

Wed. Jan 6 – 9:00am: Matins for Theophany

Wed. Jan. 6 – 10:00am: Festal Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Sat. Jan. 9 – 6:30pm: Great Vespers

Sun. Jan. 10 – 9:00am: Matins

Sun. Jan. 10 – 10:00am: Divine Liturgy (Acolyte Team 1) followed by **outdoor blessing of water**

****Confessions are heard following Vespers and by appointment****

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

On break – classes resume Tuesday January 12, 2016.

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ❖ **WELCOME** to all who are visiting with us today! We hope you will feel at home here and, if you do not already have a church home, will consider becoming a part of the Saint Herman Church community.
- ❖ **THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY** will be celebrated with two liturgies this week on January 5 and 6. See above for service times. **BRING YOUR HOLY WATER BOTTLES** on Tuesday night so that you can take holy water home with you.
- ❖ **HOUSE BLESSINGS** – Sign up for house blessings in the narthex or by contacting me via email.
- ❖ **OUTDOOR BLESSING OF WATER** will be next Sunday January 10 immediately following liturgy at Rob & Lisa Catlett's house.
- ❖ **THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO OUR FOOD DRIVE.** We collected 240 pounds of food and filled up the barrel 2.5 times during our food drive. May God bless those who donated.

SAINT HERMAN

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

PRIMATE and DIOCESAN HIERARCH

His Eminence, the Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH

PASTOR

Rev. Fr. Matthew Howell

DEACON

Rev. Dn. Thomas Ross

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*Sunday before
the Theophany
of Christ*

January 3, 2016

A NOTE REGARDING HOLY COMMUNION

Welcome! In the Orthodox Church, reception of the Holy Eucharist is reserved for baptized, chrismated Orthodox Christians who have *prepared by prayer, fasting and a recent confession*. If you are visiting from a non-Orthodox church or otherwise are not prepared to commune today, you are welcome to receive some of the unconsecrated, blessed bread which the acolytes are holding. We pray for all to be united in the Body and Blood of Christ! If you would like to learn how you can enter into communion with the Orthodox Church, please speak with our clergy.

THE EPISTLE

(For the Sunday before the Theophany of Christ)
*O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my God.*

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

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.

THE GOSPEL

(For the Sunday before the Theophany of Christ)

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."

Why do we do home blessings? Our homes are the site of much of our spiritual struggle and labor, so we need them properly prepared for our spiritual lives. A home blessing also functions as a sort of "spiritual house cleaning" that renews our homes and washes away the accumulated spiritual dirt. Why do we do them this time of year? We bless holy water at Theophany (Jan. 6), the feast of Christ's baptism, and then take it to all our homes for the blessing.

SAINTS & FEASTS OF THE DAY

Sunday before Theophany of Christ; Holy Prophet Malachi;
Martyr Gordios of Cappadocia; Venerable Thomais the
Wonderworker of Lesbos; Venerable Genevieve of Paris

A GOOD WORD

VITAMINS FOR THE SOUL

- ❖ "Toward the voice in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Thou didst come taking the likeness of a servant, seeking baptism, O Thou Who knowest no sin. The waters saw Thee and were afraid, and the Forerunner trembled and cried, saying, How shall the Light seek to be lighted for the lamp? How shall the servant place His hand upon the Master? Wherefore, sanctify me and the waters, O Savior, carrying the sin of the world." – from 1st Royal Hour for Theophany
- ❖ "Our God the Trinity hath revealed Himself to us today as free from division; for the Father uttered the clear testimony to His Son, and the Spirit descended from heaven in the likeness of a dove, and the Son bowed His pure head to the Forerunner, and being baptized did save mankind from captivity, since He is the Lover of mankind." – from 3rd Royal Hour for Theophany
- ❖ "Thus sayeth the Lord to John, Come, O Prophet, and baptize me, Who have created Thee, the Illuminator and Purifier of all by grace. Touch my divine head and falter not, O Prophet. Let be now; for I have come to fulfill all justice. Be not doubtful, therefore, at all; for verily, I have come to destroy the Archon of darkness, the Contender, who hideth in the waters, now rescuing the world from his traps, and granting eternal life, since I am the Lover of mankind." – from 6th Royal Hour for Theophany
- ❖ "Verily, the Forerunner, seeing the Lord of glory coming towards him, cried, saying: Behold the Redeemer of the world cometh from corruption. Behold, He rescueth us from sorrow. Behold, He Who granteth forgiveness of sins hath come to the earth from a pure Virgin, of His own mercy. Wherefore, He maketh us sons of God instead of servants; and instead of darkness He illuminateth mankind with the water of His divine baptism. Let us, therefore, glorify Him in unison with the Father and the Holy Spirit." -- from the 9th Royal Hour for Theophany

WHY WE DO HOME BLESSINGS

Why do we do home blessings? Our homes are the site of much of our spiritual struggle and labor, so we need them properly prepared for our spiritual lives. A home blessing also functions as a sort of “spiritual house cleaning” that renews our homes and washes away the accumulated spiritual dirt. **Why do we do them this time of year?** We bless holy water at Theophany (Jan. 6), the feast of Christ’s baptism, and then take it to all our homes for the blessing.

PLAN TO BLESS YOUR HOME

Please sign up to have your house blessed, and arrange your calendar to be there—**your home blessing is a high priority event for you and your family and is not optional for Orthodox Christians**. If you cannot be at home at the scheduled time, or if you would like to spend more time together than is on the schedule, please contact me at 907-373-5254 or via email at frmatthewhowell@gmail.com, and we will make other arrangements. I will arrange house blessings by location and call you when I am on my way to your house.

EVERY HOME SHOULD BE BLESSED

It is the tradition in the Orthodox Church for homes to be blessed every year following the Great Feast of Theophany (Jan. 6). It is also mandated by our Archdiocese. Our bishop expects that every home be blessed before the beginning of Great Lent, if possible.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR THE HOUSE BLESSING

Before the priest arrives:

1. **Open** all the doors inside the house.
2. **Turn on** all the lights on, so that I can easily navigate to bless all the rooms.
3. **Turn off** televisions, smartphones, iPads/tablets, video games and stereo systems. Your home blessing shouldn’t have to compete with anything else going on.
4. **Handle** and control pets properly and with consideration.
5. **Light** lampadas, candles, and/or incense in the family icon corner. If there is not an icon corner, set out icons on the dining room table.

After the priest arrives:

1. **Greet** the priest. He should be greeted by all of the family members, each of whom asks the priest’s blessing and reverences his right hand.
2. **Gather** the entire family with the priest before the icon corner (or table) to begin the Theophany House Blessing.
3. **Lead** the priest through the house.