

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

25636 N. Mosiertown Rd Crossingville, PA 1641

Archpriest Fr. Daniel Mathewson – *Rector*

V. Rev. David Smoley – *Retired*

Lord's Day – 1-13-2019 Parish phone: 814-734-3801

Find us on the Web at: www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

**CHRIST IS BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN!
AND WE WITH HIM!**

33rd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 8. Afterfeast of the Theophany. Sunday after Theophany. Martyrs Hermylus and Stratonicus of Belgrade (ca. 315). Ven. Irenarchus, Recluse, of Rostov (1616). Ven. Eleazar of Anzersk Island (Solovétsky Monastery—1656). Martyr Peter of Anium, at Hieropolis (ca. 309-320). St. James (Jacob), Bishop of Nisibis (350). St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers (4th c.). Ven. Maximus Kavsokalyvites (Mt. Athos—1320).

PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS: Those in need – Fr. Samuel, Fr. Andrew, Fr. David, Fr. Anthony, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, George, Paul, Pearl, William, Karen, John, Mary, Stavros, Theona, Nickolas, Timothy, Theresa, Judy, Delani, Jeremiah, Megan, Mary The Homebound... Ann, Tanya, Richard, Helen, Ruth, William, Claudia... Travelers... Catechumens and Inquirers – Grace and Christian, Bill and Kathy ... Military servers... Greg ... Newly Departed – Josephine Olnik – Marilyn Filipos, Irene Hoovler,, ... Departed Orthodox Catherine, John B., John S., Nickoli, Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy... Special requests... Gilbert, Anthony, Ian, Paul, Daleen, James, Sean, Liam, Susan, James, Joel, Jen, Roger, Jasmine, Cassandra, Raquel, Zera, Kim, Jim, Margaret, Loren, Nick, Russell

Today's Scripture Readings:

Ephesians 4:7-13 (Epistle, Sunday After)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended" – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Matthew 4:12-17 (Gospel, Sunday After)

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea,

in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

UPCOMING

Today --

-Church School Teachers meeting- following Coffee Hour

Holy Services:

+Wed. Jan. 16th - Great Vespers for St. Anthony the Great 6:00pm

+Thurs. Jan. 17th - Divine Liturgy - 9:30am

+Sat. Jan. 19th - Blessing of Lake Erie- 12:00 Bayfront.
Join us with St. Nickolas OC.

Holy Actions:

+**Missions Team** will be collecting for the "Victims of Human trafficking" sponsored by the Saxonburg monastery. And we will continue to collect food pantry items for EU. See the donation Tree in the Hall or see Anna R. or Debbie K. for more details.

---Also, There are OCMC summer mission trip scholarships available for anyone interested. See board in hall for more information on trips or see www.ocmc.org

+**Hospitality Team** will meet on Tuesday Jan. 15th at 11am in the parish hall.

+**Outreach Team** thanks everyone who prayed for and attended the blessing of French Creek in Meadville last week. There were 18+ in attendance.

+**Orthodox Education Team** will meet today following Coffee Hour. The team will be planning the upcoming weeks education schedule.

+Monday Jan. 21st – Ladies Altar Society Meeting – 11am Edinboro Fire hall

Holy Events:

+Welcome to Fr. Thomas Parthenakis serving with us today!

+A new Parish Directory is being compiled. Please fill out the form and drop it in the basket in the vestibule.

+Blessing of homes begins following today's service. Please schedule with Fr. Daniel on a time convenient.

+Fri. Jan. 18th - Prolife March Washington D.C. see

Rdr. Andrew

+Sat. Jan. 26th Erie March for Life- Perry Square 11am

for more information or go to

<http://www.peopleforlife.org/>

+Monday Feb. 4th – Matushka Gail will have her surgery at Children’s hospital in Pittsburgh. Prayers are appreciated.

Holy Words:

Theophany—Showing the World to be the world

I was standing beside the Jordan River, somewhere along its trek through Israel. I was with a group of pilgrims led by Met. Kallistos Ware gathered for the Great Blessing of the Waters. Somehow, it seemed that I was the only priest who had brought an epitachelion (stole), so I loaned it to the Metropolitan for the service. As the service began, I noticed a school of fish at the edge of the water, watching the bishop as eagerly as the rest of us.

Great art Thou, O Lord, O Lord, and marvelous are Thy works. There is no hymn which suffices to hymn Thy wonders!

The Metropolitan’s voice boomed out across the valley in its Oxford-accented tones, sounding like the voice of God. The area where we had gathered was also marked by small groups of Protestant pilgrims who had apparently gathered to re-baptize one another. At the sound of the Bishop’s voice, everyone stopped to listen.

The words of the prayer over the waters continued. Written by St. Sophronius of Jerusalem in the 6th century, they carried the same style as that of St. Basil: strings of appositives accompanied almost every statement, expanding, echoing, expounding and explaining each phrase with yet more lines of Scripture.

And then something caught my ear that jarred me awake from the cadence of the words:

And grant to it the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan. Now, that’s a very odd statement to make while standing at the waters of the Jordan. Aren’t the waters of the Jordan always the waters of the Jordan? What is the “blessing of Jordan?” Further, the prayer said, But show this water, O Master of all, to be the water of redemption, the water of sanctification, the purification of flesh and spirit, the loosing of bonds, the remission of sins, the illumination of the soul, the washing of regeneration, the renewal of the Spirit, the gift of adoption to sonship, the garment of incorruption, the fountain of life.

I was already puzzled that we were praying for God to make the Jordan be the Jordan, and now we were asking Him to “show” this water to be a string of marvelous wonders. Shouldn’t we ask Him to “make” it be those wonders?

The answer came with the drop of a theological coin. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann taught that, in the sacraments, we are not asking God to *make* something to be other than it is but to reveal it to be what it *truly* is. Asking God to show the Jordan to be the Jordan is simply the most blatant example of this principle.

A problem associated with sacramental thought, if this principle is forgotten, is that things that are blessed somehow *cease* to be what they are. Instead, they become exceptional moments in which the things of this world are no longer things of this world. They change while everything around them remains the same. We go to Church, the miracle happens, but remains confined to the altar or the font, while the world around it remains unchanged. The Church becomes the locus of the extraordinary while the world is stuck in the ordinary. It is, ironically, a two-storey sacramental order. *This* thing is holy, *that* thing is not. It is a diminishment of Christ’s work. The sacraments become points of

contact with the second-storey, tiny windows in which miniscule rays of sunshine peak out into an otherwise darkened world. But the world itself remains dark.

The nature of the true sacramental understanding is revealed very precisely in the words of St. Sophronius. The Jordan is the Jordan. It is we who fail to see the world as it is. We imagine the world to be self-contained and self-referential. The Jordan is not the Jordan – that’s just a name: it is just some water, hydrogen and oxygen flowing over the surface of the third rock from the sun.

On the 6th of January (19th on the Old Calendar), Orthodox priests across the world, in their many thousands, will stand beside public waters, rivers, creeks, springs, seas and oceans, in some cases hovering over holes piercing through feet of ice, and speak the words of St. Sophronius. All of them will call upon God to send the blessing of the Jordan on the Nile, the Volga, the Mississippi, the Bering Strait, the Bermuda Triangle, the Amazon, the Antarctic, the Yenesei, the Tennessee, the Atlantic and Pacific, the Black Sea and the Aegean, the Clinch River here in Appalachia, and all the waters of the world will be shown to be the Jordan.

The Feast of Christ’s Baptism is called “Theophany.” It means the “showing forth of God.” It is so named because, in the event of Christ’s Baptism, we see Christ, the Son of God, hear the voice of the Father (“Thou art my beloved Son...”), and see the Spirit in the form of a dove. It is a “showing forth” of God as Trinity. But when the Trinity is made manifest, everything is, of necessity made manifest. The truth of all things is revealed.

This “truth of all things” is the revelation of the world as sacrament. The waters and all that is in the world is a means of communion with God because of His Divine condescension. The world was not created to be a place of an “alternative” existence, one without God. It exists as the means and focal point of our communion. The sacraments revealed to us within the life of the Church do not exist as isolated instances of a divine encounter but as examples and revelations of what God is in the world. “Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.”

This understanding does much to explain Schmemmann’s insistence that secularism is the great heresy of our age: it is the denial of the sacramental character of the world. Just as man is created in the image and likeness of God, and thus *capable* of bearing God’s image, so too, creation has a sacramental and iconic capability. The world is not an impregnable wall that hides us from God. It is the very means by which, and the place in which, God makes Himself known. We were created for communion with God. This takes place here and now, within this world.

St. Maximus the Confessor spoke of a number a cosmic reconciliation, or an overcoming of divisions: male/female, paradise/world, heavenly/earthly, intelligible/sensible, uncreated/created. None of these distinctions disappear, but are fulfilled in their proper role and purpose. The world as sacrament participates in this overcoming of divisions in the union of humanity to God. Our union with the created order, particularly as sacrament, describes the essential priesthood of humanity – “microcosm and mediator,” in the words of St. Maximus.

This is the showing of the world to be what it is meant to be, as well as its revelation to us of ourselves in Christ. And all of creation, like the fish, gathers at our feet to see this strange wonder!

+Fr. Stephen Freeman