

Scripture Readings

EPISTLE **Ephesians 4:7-13** BRETHREN, grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (in saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

GOSPEL **Matthew 4:12-17** At that time, Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth He went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."



Gospel Reflection: Seeing Ourselves As We Truly Are

Fresh out of the waters of the Jordan, Jesus, in today's Gospel, begins His fateful sojourn towards Jerusalem and the ultimate shame of abandonment. It would be a long and arduous pilgrimage. He begins in Capernaum with a simple but engaging message: the light is here now -- change your lives. As He did at the beginning of his public ministry in general, Jesus begins by quoting the Prophet Isaiah. As if to jolt the people of Israel out of their stupor, out of their moral ambiguity, and away from the lure of the shadows of culture and history, Isaiah exclaims that those in darkness will have the light, those living in death's shadow will have the chance to see clearly the saving power of God.

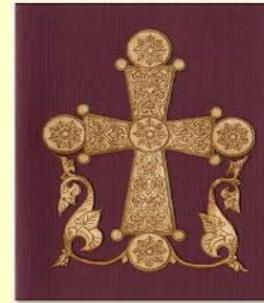
Having reminded his audience of the prophet's words, Matthew does not have Jesus seek to further explain the message. Rather, the Lord goes straight to the central theme of His entire ministry: change your lives, for God's Kingdom is at hand. There is a compelling relationship between having the light and changing our lives. Like Israel, we too often live our daily lives with a blurry film obscuring our sight, we see life through the prism of our passions, our baser desires, and the dynamics of our ego. We know instinctively what God asks of us, but we get lost in the shadows and among the dark forces of the world that seek to thwart our progress to genuine peace and happiness -- or fool us into thinking that these gifts come from someone or something other than the God of mercy.

Having the light, in the person and life of Jesus Christ, means we can reach a clarity about ourselves. By placing our lives next to that of Christ, can see plainly to the center of our soul. The light of God, manifest in the Theophany of the Lord, lets us see ourselves as we truly are and then, in hope and promise, change what we need to -- to repent (metanoia), to submit ourselves to majesty of His redemptive story rather than make Him a pathetically small part of ours. Let us walk now in the light and use it to see ourselves and, seeing who we truly are, respond by changing our hearts and our lifestyle to more faithfully follow the One who is the light and life of us all.

The Kingdom of Heaven is indeed at hand!

We should not think of the Kingdom of Heaven as some future place and state. Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, entered our reality. He is Emanuel or 'God with us.' The danger of not understanding this is that we can fall into the trap of thinking we have tomorrow to be doing what we should today -- namely leading a prayerful/sacramental life daily for our growth as human beings. The Pharisees and other people in the Bible missed the entire significance of Jesus' presence among them and that the kingdom of God was already here. They kept looking toward some future state of when God's kingdom would arrive not knowing it was among them already. People think and act like this today. Since God exists in the ever present now, the most important part of our lives is every present moment.

We can experience the kingdom now though to a lesser extent due to our fallen world. Our present moments of love, peace and joy are all foretastes of what we will experience eternally. Living the sacramental life sincerely opens our hearts to this perception and experience. Does this mean we can create a utopia, a place of complete perfection, a literal Heaven on earth? The answer is no. The kingdom of God on earth is not like an earthly kingdom with some geographic boundaries. It begins with the work of God's Spirit in people's lives and in relationships. By embracing the divine presence among us and within us through the sacramental life, the kingdom has already come to us and we become citizens of the kingdom. We transform ourselves within and the collective transformation of each of us transforms the world without. Therefore, what we create here on earth through our devotion to Christ is a glimpse, or manifestation of what is to come but it is still a valid present reality that God expects us to create.



In Blessed Memory

Angie Kontostergios (40 Days)

Hariklia Ioannou (1 Year)

Eleutherios Vasilatos (1 Year)

Dr. Nikolaos A. Stavrou (5 Years)

Savvas Koudellou (15 Years)

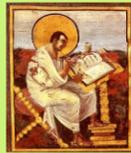
May their memories be eternal!!

Synaxis of John the Forerunner

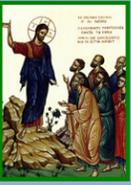


For Their Health and Salvation

His Eminence Metropolitan +Panteleimon; His Eminence Archbishop +Pavlos of Aleppo and His Eminence Mar +Gregorios Ioanna of Aleppo, who were kidnapped; persecuted Christians of the Middle East, the Nun Theodora Nicholas Ellis, Katherine Ellis, Kelly, Despina Bayz, Jon Wood, Tom Dale, Joy Kizzie, Lori, Peter, Marie Burpeau, Bill Pastis, Frosso Malavakis, Marge Costas, Christopher Costas, Evangelia Pantazakos, George Dize-los, John Karas; George, Constantina Speris; Andrew Katson; Lynne; Selena Pappas, George, Andrianna, Michalis, Kosma, Yianni, Alfred Q., Staff Sergeant Nicholas Comas.



ST. GEORGE BIBLE STUDY 2017: The second semester (Luke 12-24) will begin on Thursday, January 12, 2017, at 10:30 AM and 7:00 PM, after the Theophany of the Lord. All are welcome (even if you weren't there for the first half!)

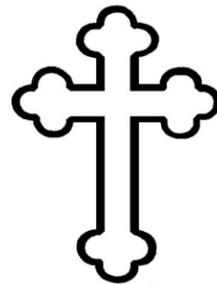


ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS 2017: "Modern Trials to Our Ancient Faith: The Challenges to Living Orthodoxy in America," is offered every Sunday through May 14 starting 11:30 AM in the Church library. Contact Michael Haldas at Michael.haldas@verizon.net for additional information.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

We implore you to begin the new year with your loving pledge of support for St. George Greek Orthodox Church. Please start planning your 2017 Stewardship with a visit to https://stgeorge.ccbchurch.com/w_give_online.php - Thank you for helping make St. George stronger, healthier and better positioned to preach the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in 2017 and beyond!

Affirmation of Office: Jan. 8, The following have been ratified and will be joining our Parish Council: Georgio Comminos, Kostas Drakakis, Jack Kalavritinos, Anastasia Kranias, Andrea Liacouras-Kapsilis, Panagiota Plotas, Gus Sciliaris, and Diane Simeon



PARISH ACTIVITIES

PHILOPTOCHOS: Our first meeting of 2017 on Jan.10 at 7PM in the Church Library/Conference Room.

50 PLUS: Vasilopita Luncheon on Jan. 11, at St. George. Featured speaker will be Dr. Tassos J. Sfondouris, DDS, MS, whose topic will be "Understanding Dental Implants." Luncheon will be served and all are welcome. Jerry Palazo will be holding Senior Exercises starting on Jan. 18, between Noon – 1:00 PM at St. George. For information, please call Maria Kopsidas at (240) 421-9909. There will be no First Monday Brunch in January.

GOYA: Youth Night on Jan. 13 at Sky Zone Trampoline Park in Gaithersburg. Please meet at Sky Zone (15813 Gaither Drive Gaithersburg, MD 20877) at 6:40PM., fee is \$23 per person. Fill out online waiver in advance at <http://www.skyzone.com/gaithersburg/Online-Waiver>

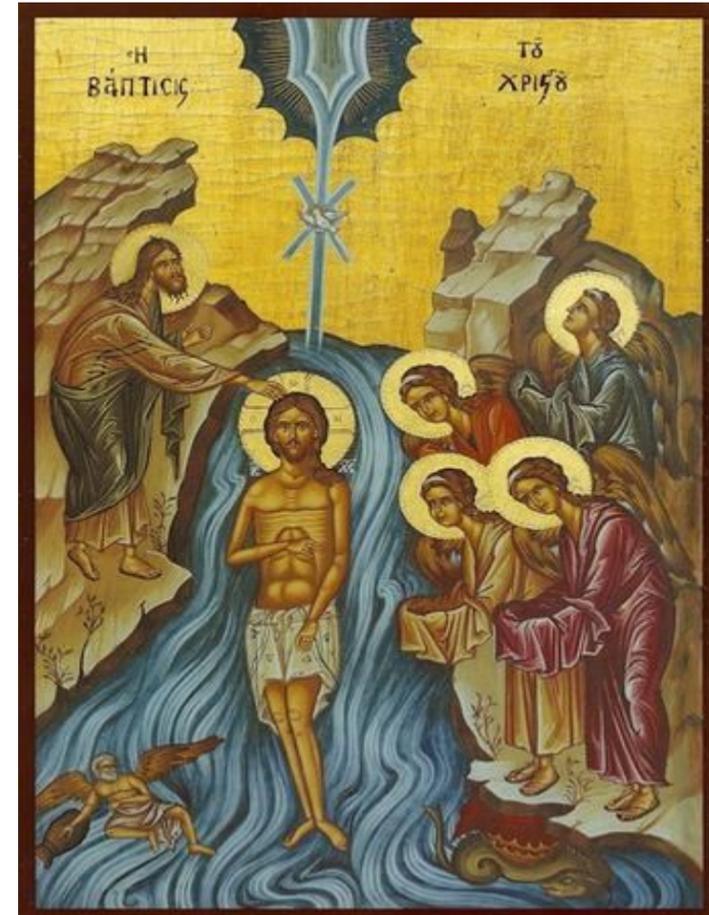
GOYA: Sights and Sounds Arts Festival: March 11 &12. All 7-12 grade youth are encouraged to share their talents through a wide use of creative mediums, including painting, photography, music, dance, drama, writing, and much more. Please register online and mark for which categories you are submitting and whether as individual or group talents: https://stgeorge.ccbchurch.com/form_response.php?id=111 - For more information, contact Nicole Averinos at stgsightsandsounds@gmail.com



The Greek Orthodox Church of Saint George

Rev. Fr. Dimitrios J. Antokas, Presiding Priest: FrAntokas@stgeorge.org

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SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JANUARY 8, 2017

Seasonal Kontakion in the Fourth Tone
You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us. With fuller understanding we sing to You: "You came, You were made manifest, the unapproachable light."

Apolytikon of Afterfeast of the Theophany in the First Tone

Lord, when You were baptized in the Jordan, the veneration of the Trinity was revealed. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved, and the Spirit, in the guise of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world

Ἀπολυτίκιον

Ἐν Ἰορδάνῃ βαπτιζομένου σου Κύριε, ἡ τῆς Τριάδος ἐφανέρωθη προσκύνησις, τοῦ γὰρ Γεννήτορος ἡ φωνὴ προσεμαρτύρει σοί, ἀγαπητὸν σὲ Υἱὸν ὀνομάζουσα, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐν εἶδει περιστεράς, ἐβεβαίου τοῦ λόγου τὸ ἀσφαλές. Ὁ ἐπιφανεῖς Χριστέ ὁ Θεός, καὶ τὸν κόσμον φωτίσας δόξα σοί.