WEEKLY BULLETIN

January 5, 2025, Vol. 42, No. 1
Sunday Before Theophany

THE VOICE

SAINT ELIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America

64 W. Wilbeth Rd., Akron, Ohio 44301

Church Hall: 330-724-7129
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www.saintelia.com
www.facebook.com/sainteliakron

His Eminence Alexander, Archbishop of Toledo, Bulgarian Diocese, Very Rev. Mitred Archpriest Father Don Anthony Freude, Parish Rector Rev. Protodeacon James M. Gresh, Rev. Deacon Aaron Gray

SAINT ELIA THE PROPHET PARISH

2024 Parish Council

President: Veronica Bilas
V. President: Sandy Graham
Secretary: Subdeacon Aaron Gray
Treasurer: Reader Joshua Wherley
Members: Subdeacon Terrence Bilas, Bud Graham, Jefferson Hodge, Nicholas Morelli

Choir Director: Subdeacon Terrence A. Bilas
Assistant Directors: Anastasia Bohush
Deaconisa Heidi Gresh, Reader Michael Luc

Church School Coordinator: Popadia Donna Freude
Staff: Natalie Slife, Eve Tavenier, Reader Nicholas Morelli, Frances Hakim, Subdeacon David Trace

Sisterhood of St. Juliana:

V. President: Sandy Graham; Secretary: Katherine Hodge Treasurer: Mary Magensky

Workers of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr:

Coordinators: Subdeacon Aaron Gray, Veronica Bilas

Scheduled Readers - 2025

Sunday, January 5 - Daniel Slife
Sunday, January 12 - Bud Graham
Sunday, January 19 - Sandy Graham
Sunday, January 26 - Reader Michael Luc
Sunday, February 2 - Reader Nicholas Morelli
Sunday, February 9 - Reader Joshua Wherley

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

28th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – Tone 3
SUNDAY AND EVE OF THE THEOPHANY.

Saturday, January 4

5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, January 5

9:10 am 3rd and 6th Hours: Daniel Slife

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Epistle Reader: Daniel Slife

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8 Gospel: Mark 1:1-8-

Panakhida for +Sandra Dodovich and family members as requested by Anthony Dodovich

THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Sunday Evening, January 5

5:00 pm Vigil of Theophany – Compline and Matins

Matins Gospel: Mark 1:9-11

Great Sanctification of Water

Monday, January 6

8:00 am Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great

29th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - Tone 4
SUNDAY AFTER THE THEOPHANY.
AFTERFEAST OF THE THEOPHANY

Saturday, January 11

5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, January 12

9:10 am 3rd and 6th Hours: Bud Graham

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Epistle Reader: Bud Graham

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13 Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Commemorated on January 6

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind. The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but "to bury human sin by water," to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "the nature of water" and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms. The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).

CHRIST IS BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN!
GLORIFY HIM!.

The Great Sanctification of Water

The Great Blessing of Water is prescribed in the Church on the Feast of Theophany. It begins with the chanting and censing of the water placed in the center of the church building, surrounded by candles and flowers as the sign of the beautiful world of God's original creation and ultimate glorification through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Kingdom of God. The service of the Great Blessing of Water itself reveals the meaning of the event for the Christian People. The readings from the Holy Scriptures, particularly the messianic words from the Prophecy of Isaiah, and the litanies and prayers and hymns all serve to tell us what the great meaning of the Epiphany, and indeed of the entire Christian Faith, is for us men and our world.

Continued on next page

Sanctification of the World

It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has appeared in the world, immersed in the streams of the Jordan River (which is itself full of biblical significance), all flesh and all matter is sanctified and made pure and holy in Him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the evil and wickedness of men.

In the Lord's epiphany to the world, all creation becomes good again, indeed "very good," the way that God called it and created it to be in the beginning of time. **(Genesis 1:31)** For in the beginning the Voice of the Lord spoke, as at the time of Jesus' baptism, and ***"the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters."*** **(Genesis 1:2)** At this time as well the "Breath of Life" was breathing in man and in everything that was made to be alive by God for a life of living communion with Him. **(Genesis 1:30, 2:7)** The world and everything in it is indeed "very good." And when it becomes polluted and corrupted and dead, filled with evil and not with God, then God Himself does everything to save it and glorify it once more. This is what Epiphany, and the Great Blessing of Water specifically tells us: that God has saved and glorified by Christ and the Spirit the "very good" creation that He made through the same Christ and the same Spirit in the very beginning of the world.

The Great Sanctification of Water will be celebrated on Sunday evening, January 5

Blessing of Homes

The Central sign of God's sanctification of all things through Christ's epiphany to the world and His baptism in the Jordan River, is the act of blessing the homes and to pray with the faithful in the place where they live, blessing the surroundings with the sanctified water.

Father Don is planning to bless homes this week (with Popadia's Donna's driving assistance). If it is your wish that Father comes to your home for this special blessing, please sign the list on the Candle Desk or call Father 330-724-7009

When Father comes for the blessing, the following general principles should be observed:

1. A lighted candle, an icon or cross, and a bowl for the blessed water should be placed on a clean table, covered, if possible, with a white cloth,

2. All radios, televisions, etc. should be turned off.

3. All who are present in the house should come together and stand by the table. The first Christian names of all the members of the household, both living and deceased, should be clearly printed on a piece of paper. A form for this purpose is on the Candle Desk.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

But you are watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. **6** For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **2** As it is written in [a]the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You." **3** "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' "**4** John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance [b]for the remission of sins. **5** Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.**6** Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. **8** I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

HELPING THOSE IN NEED

From November 15 to January 6, our parish charitable group, the Workers of St. Elizabeth, the New Martyr, will be collecting for the Peter Maurin Center. Here is an updated list of needs:

- **Hand warmers (many needed)**
- **Socks, large athletic type (many needed)**
- **Gloves and Hats**
- **Underwear, men and women, all sizes**
- **Hygiene items, either full or travel size, such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant, lotion, razors, feminine products, hand sanitizer, hygiene wipes (very much needed)**
- **Toilet paper**
- **Backpacks - news gently used**
- **Flashlights, including batteries**

Please place your donated items in the bin located in the Church Vestibule.

OUR STEWARDSHIP, December 29 , 2024

Candles:	**$ 110.00**
Tray Offerings:	**335.00**
Christmas Offerings	**749.00**
PayPal:	**4.80**
Tithely:	**224,23**
TOTAL OFFERINGS:	**$1,423,03**

REMEMBERING THOSE SERVING IN THE ARMED

Subdeacon Anthony Freude, son of Father Don and Popadia Donna
Egor Cravecenco, son of Sergehi and Ludmila
Kristopher Barnhart, son of Diego and Chanelle

REMEMBERING OUR SICK AND SHUT-INS

Archbishop Benjamin
Archbishop Nathaniel
Mitred Archpriest Daniel
Matushka Myra Kovalak
Archpriest Andrew Moulton
Archpriest Emil Huntyan
Priest Gabriel Bilas
Matushka Christine Zebren
Matushka Laryssa Huntyan
Matushka Valeria Zahersky
Pani Dolores Zuder
Subdeacon Martin Paluch
Reader John Paluch
Florence Lambo
Mary Magensky
Sarah Niglio
Melissa Trace
Louis Hakim
Halina Woroncow
Joseph Taylor
Brian Gable
Hilda Ralich
Joey Gresh

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Orthodox Christian Women
Annual Winter Mini-Retreat
& Continental Breakfast

Saturday January 25, 2025 – 9:30am to noon

St. Thomas Eastern Orthodox Church
555 S. Cleveland-Massillon Road
Fairlawn, Ohio

Join us for a morning of warm fellowship and encouragement in faith, as

A panel of
Convert Orthodox Clergy
Present their faith journeys

ALL ARE WELCOME!

For more information call:

Sandy Menhorn 330-74-7792 or
Nancy Studebaker 330-655-9638

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