

# THE LADDER

of  
Divine  
Ascent



Volume 11, Issue 5 The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church January 2010

## House Blessings

The custom of blessing homes during the Theophany season is of special beauty and significance. It is not simply a sentimental tradition without meaning, nor is it a custom whose meaning we have forgotten, like an old friend whose face we remember, but whose impact on our life has been forgotten. When an Orthodox Christian believer moves into a new home, he dedicates his new home as the abode of a follower of Christ. He asks that God, the source of all goodness and the Giver of every perfect gift, to bless his house and all that is within it; he recalls that Jesus Christ, His Son, came to bring Salvation to all, even as He brought Salvation to the house of Zacchaeus; he prays that the Holy Spirit may abide in it, guiding those who dwell in it on the paths of righteousness.

On the Feast of Theophany we rededicate our homes for this original purpose, just as we must periodically rededicate our life to Christ. We do it especially on this Feast because this is the day on which we remember in the Church Year the coming of Christ who began His Ministry when He descended into Jordan to be baptized by St John the Forerunner and Baptist. He enters again into our lives reminding us that we must "repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." An Orthodox Christian must dedicate not only himself and his house to the Lord, but his daily work and all his efforts as well. All things are to be done to the glory of God. That is why in the Orthodox Church, not only religious objects, such as icons, crosses, churches and vestments, are blessed, but also homes, fields, animals and all objects which are used in our daily life for the good of man. In this the Church expresses its faith that the Holy Spirit's sanctifying action extends over the whole Creation.

*Because of the brief period between Theophany and the beginning of Great Lent, Fr Marcus will be available on Saturdays, Sundays, and by appointment for House Blessings from January 6<sup>th</sup> until February 13<sup>th</sup>.*

## Theophany: The Baptism of the Lord

*This excerpt is from a sermon (Oration 39) by Saint Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus). Here Gregory, one of the greatest preachers of the early Church (and together with Basil the Great and John Chrysostom one of the 'Three Holy Hierarchs'), points out that Christ was baptized not for his sake but for ours, sanctifying the waters of baptism for all generations to come and manifesting the Trinity through the Spirit who comes to rest on him in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father that resounds from heaven.*

Christ is bathed in light; let us also be bathed in light. Christ is baptized; let us also go down with him, and rise with him.

John is baptizing when Jesus draws near. Perhaps he comes to sanctify his baptizer; certainly he comes to bury sinful humanity in the waters. He comes to sanctify the Jordan for our sake and in readiness for us; He who is spirit and flesh comes to begin a new creation through the Spirit and water.

The Baptizer protests; Jesus insists. Then John says: "I ought to be baptized by you." He is the lamp in the presence of the Sun, the voice in the presence of the Word, the friend in the presence of the Bridegroom, the greatest of all born of woman in the presence of the Firstborn of all creation, the one who leapt in his mother's womb in the presence of Him who was adored in the womb, the forerunner and future forerunner in the presence of Him who has already come and is to come again. "I ought to be baptized by you": we should also add, "and for you", for John is to be baptized in blood, washed clean like Peter, not only by the washing of his feet.

Jesus rises from the waters; the world rises with Him. The heavens like Paradise with its flaming sword, closed by Adam for himself and his descendants, are rent open. The Spirit comes to Him as to an equal, bearing witness to his Godhead. A Voice bears witness to Him from heaven, His place of origin. The Spirit descends in bodily form like the dove that so long ago announced the ending of the flood and so gives honor to the body that is one with God.

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## The Postfeast of Theophany

The Feast of Theophany is followed by an eight-day Postfeast during which the normal fasting rules are mitigated. The Saturday and Sunday after Theophany have special readings assigned to them, which relate to Christ's 40 days in the wilderness and His subsequent Temptation. These point to the perseverance necessary in the Christian struggle. There is thus a liturgical continuum between the Feast of Theophany and the beginning of Great Lent.

# St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

## Schedule of Services

### January 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p style="margin: 0;">A Word from the Desert</p> <p style="margin: 0;">“I no longer fear God, but I love Him; for love casts out fear.”</p> <p style="margin: 0;">~~~ Saint Anthony the Great (January 17<sup>th</sup>)</p>					<p><b>01</b> <i>no fast</i> New Year's Day Circumcision of the Lord St Basil the Great</p>	<p><b>02</b> Prefeast of Theophany Ven Seraphim of Sarov <b>Great Vespers [Compline Canon]</b> 6:00 pm</p>
<p><b>03</b> 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost Sunday Before Theophany <i>No Church School</i> Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Slavonic Molioben 12:30 pm</p>	<p><b>04</b> Prefeast of Theophany Vespers and Compline 6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>05</b> <i>strict fast</i> Royal Hours 7:00 am Theophany Eve Vesper Liturgy Great Blessing of Waters 6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>06</b> Matins of the Feast 7:00 am Theophany [Great] Vespers 6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>07</b> Synaxis of St John the Baptizer</p>	<p><b>08</b> <i>Fast</i> S'burg Area 'Small Group' House Blessings &amp; Fellowship 7:00 pm</p>	<p><b>09</b> House Blessings <i>Inquirer's Class</i> 4:30 pm Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p><b>10</b> 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost Sunday After Theophany House Blessings Divine Liturgy 9:30 am</p>	<p><b>11</b> Great Blessing of Water @ Falls Park 2:00 pm</p>	<p><b>12</b> OCF at Furman University 5:00 pm</p>	<p><b>13</b> <i>Fast</i> <i>Inquirer's Class</i> 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>14</b> Leavetaking of Theophany OCF at Clemson University 7:00 pm</p>	<p><b>15</b> <i>Fast</i></p>	<p><b>16</b> House Blessings Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p><b>17</b> 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost Zacchaeus Sunday Anthony the Great 'Ask the Priest' House Blessings Divine Liturgy 9:30 am</p>	<p><b>18</b> St Athanasius the Great</p>	<p><b>19</b> OCF at Furman University 5:00 pm</p>	<p><b>20</b> <i>Fish, Wine, &amp; Oil</i> Daily Vespers 6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>21</b> Furman University <i>Lecture</i> 'God and Science in the Eastern Christian Church' @ Daniel chapel 7:00 pm</p>	<p><b>22</b> <i>Fast</i></p>	<p><b>23</b> <i>Inquirer's Class</i> 4:30 pm Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p><b>24/31</b> Publican and the Pharisee Prodigal Son Annual Meeting (31<sup>st</sup>) House Blessings Divine Liturgy 9:30 am</p>	<p><b>25</b> Frs Marcus &amp; Nikolay @ DOS Diocesan Council &amp; Pastoral Conference in Ft Worth, TX St Gregory the Theologian</p>	<p><b>26</b> OCF at Furman University 5:00 pm</p>	<p><b>27</b> <i>Fast-Free</i> Translation of the Relics of St John Chrysostom Reader's Vespers 6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>28</b> OCF at Clemson University 7:00 pm</p>	<p><b>29</b> <i>Fast-Free</i></p>	<p><b>30</b> Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs House Blessings Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>

Fellowship and Goffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy.

Church School: Begins again on Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, before Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am prompt (no church school on Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>)!!!

Confessions on Saturdays following Great Vespers (as noted above) and before Wednesday Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Fr Marcus is available Saturdays & Sunday afternoons for House Blessings & by appointment Jan 6<sup>th</sup> through Feb 13<sup>th</sup>!

Annual Parish Meeting, Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, following Divine Liturgy and a brief Goffee Fellowship.

*We magnify Thee, O Christ, the Giver of life!*

*For our sake today Thou wast baptized in the flesh by John in the waters of the Jordan.*

A Word from the Desert

“Do not trust in your own righteousness, do not worry about the past, but control your tongue and your stomach.”

~~~ Saint Anthony the Great

**Theophany Outdoor Great Blessing of Waters**  
**Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm**  
**At Falls Park in Downtown Greenville, SC**



At 2:00 pm we will gather at 'Tate Plaza' (where Camperdown Way intersects South Main Street) and process down to the river (to the area called 'River Terraces').  
 See <http://www.fallspark.com/> for more information.

**Lecture**

**God and Science in the Eastern Orthodox Church**

*Dr. Daniel P. Buxhoeveden*

**Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**

**7:00 pm @ Daniel Chapel, Furman University**

*Dr Buxhoeveden will examine the relationship between modern science and traditional faith from the unique perspective of a biological anthropologist who is also an Orthodox Christian.*

*Theophany...*

*Continued from page 1*

Today let us do honor to Christ's baptism and celebrate this feast in holiness. Be cleansed entirely and continue to be cleansed. Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men, for whom His every word and every revelation exist. He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great Light, bathed in the glory of Him who is the Light of heaven. You are to enjoy more and more the pure and dazzling Light of the Trinity, as now you have received - though not in its fullness - a ray of its Splendor, proceeding from the one God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power forever and ever.

Amen.



**2009 Financial Snapshot**

|                       | Income    | Expenses  |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>YTD (thru Nov)</b> | \$121,557 | \$129,997 |
| <b>November</b>       | \$11,031  | \$11,178  |
| <b>YTD Charity</b>    | \$12,833  | \$14,000  |

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ALMS SUNDAY**

January 10<sup>th</sup> is our Alms Collection Sunday. Please remember to bring foodstuffs and personal items. Baskets are in the vestibule as you enter the church. These items and money collected support the following (among other occasional) charitable needs: **United Ministries, OCMC Missionaries Floyd and Ancutsa Frantz, two St Vladimir's Seminarians, the Carolinas Deanery fund, a widowed priest's wife and her two children.** Thanks to all who continue to give so generously to our outreach efforts!

**UPCOMING ---'SMALL GROUP' MEETING & CHURCH SCHOOL**

\* A 'Small Group' Fellowship is meeting monthly in the Spartanburg area for those parishioners interested. It is a time for fellowship, food, and spiritual growth, and to encourage and strengthen community. The group meets once a month on Friday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All members participate by hosting and/or leading discussion. Come and see if it is for you. The next meeting will be held on January 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Contact Teresa Dees you may contact for more info (864 373 1316).

**UPCOMING EVENTS --- PARISH MEETING, HOUSE BLESSINGS**

House Blessings begin after Theophany (January 6th); outdoor Great Blessing of Waters (Reedy River) at Falls Park, Sunday, January 10th following the Divine Liturgy --- gather at Falls Park at 2:00 pm.

Our annual parish meeting will take place on Sunday, January 31st, following Divine Liturgy and a brief Coffee Hour.

**Δ Reminder and a Hearty 'Thank You'!**

**January Fellowship and Goffee Hour**

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| January 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Team 5 |
| January 10 <sup>th</sup> | Team 6 |
| January 17 <sup>th</sup> | Team 7 |
| January 24 <sup>th</sup> | Team 8 |
| January 31 <sup>st</sup> | Team 1 |

**Celebrating Anniversaries and Birthdays in January**  
Lynn Peelman (4<sup>th</sup>), David Gddins (5<sup>th</sup>), Mary Malushizky (9<sup>th</sup>), Ron and Helen Facchini (11<sup>th</sup>), Alex Alexeff (12<sup>th</sup>), George Simon (14<sup>th</sup>), Irina Simpson (16<sup>th</sup>), Fr Gregory, Naomi Weisel (17<sup>th</sup>), Simon Gantrell (20<sup>th</sup>), Monya Bock (21<sup>st</sup>), Natalie Prochak (23<sup>rd</sup>), Donna Radich (24<sup>th</sup>), Lee Serra, Steve Kerestan (25<sup>th</sup>), Mark Simpson (26<sup>th</sup>), Georgia Pelinsky, Gharissa Pichai (30<sup>th</sup>), Georgia and Paul Pelinsky (30<sup>th</sup>)

**From the Feast of the Theophany**

**The Lord, incarnate of the Virgin,  
Having clothed material flesh  
with the immaterial fire of his divinity,  
Wraps Himself in the waters of Jordan,  
For He has been glorified!**

*(from the Canon of the Feast)*



**Orthodox Church in America**

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Rev Fr Marcus C Burch, Rector  
Rev Fr Nikolay Miletkov, Assistant

**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

**Schedule of Services**

Vespers, Wednesday, 6:00 pm  
Great Vespers, Saturday, 6:00 pm  
Divine Liturgy, Sunday, 9:30 am

**"Whatever is obtained as a result  
of long and persistent prayer will remain."**

~~~ St John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* ~~~



PLACE  
POSTAGE  
HERE

**January 2010**