

THE LADDER

of
Divine
Ascent



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The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

January 2008

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 home for its 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.

To arrange to have your home blessed during the Theophany season, see Fr Marcus.

Theophany: The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

This excerpt is from a sermon (Oration 39) by Saint Gregory the Theologian ('Nazianzen'). Here Gregory, one of the greatest preachers of the early Church (and together with Basil the Great and John Chrysostom known as 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 as 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 Baptist 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.

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 for ever and ever. Amen.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| The Feast of Theophany | page 1 |
| House Blessings | page 1 |
| January Calendar | page 2 |
| March for Life, Ask the Priest, etc. | page 3 |
| Announcements | page 4 |

St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

~~~ Schedule of Services ~~~ January 2008

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 30 31 st Sunday after Pentecost Sunday after Nativity/before Theophany Divine Liturgy 9:30 am | 31 Leavetaking of Nativity Great Vespers 6:00 pm | 01 New Year's Day Circumcision of the Lord St Basil the Great Divine Liturgy 9:30 am | 02 <i>no fast</i> Prefeast of Theophany <i>No Inquirers Class</i> Vespers and Compline 6:00 pm | 03 Prefeast of Theophany | 04 <i>no fast</i> Prefeast of Theophany Royal Hours of Theophany 6:00 pm | 05 <i>wine & oil</i> Theophany Eve Vespers of Theophany Great Blessing of Waters 3:00 pm Vigil 6:00 pm |
| 06 32 nd Sunday after Pentecost Theophany Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Great Blessing of Waters at Falls Park ~~ 1:00 pm ~~ | 07 Synaxis of St John the Baptizer | 08 | 09 <i>wine & oil</i> Confessions 5:00 pm Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm | 10 | 11 <i>wine & oil</i> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> At Holy Apostles in Columbia Divine Liturgy 9:00 am March for Life 11:00 am </div> | 12 Confessions (following Vespers) Great Vespers 6:00 pm |
| 13 33 rd Sunday after Pentecost Sunday after Theophany Charity Brunch House Blessings Divine Liturgy 9:30 am | 14 Leavetaking of Theophany | 15 Parish Council Meeting 5:30 pm | 16 <i>fast</i> Confessions 5:00 pm Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm | 17 Venerable and Godbearing Father Anthony the Great Divine Liturgy 7:00 am | 18 <i>fast</i> | 19 Choir Rehearsal 5:15 pm Confessions (following Vespers) Great Vespers 6:00 pm |
| 20 34 th Sunday after Pentecost House Blessings Divine Liturgy 9:30 am | 21 | 22 | 23 <i>fast</i> Confessions 5:00 pm Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm | 24 OCF @ Clemson University 7:00 pm | 25 <i>wine & oil</i> St Gregory the Theologian | 26 Confessions (following Vespers) Great Vespers 6:00 pm |
| 27 35 th Sunday after Pentecost New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia Annual Parish Meeting Divine Liturgy 9:30 am | 28 | 29 | 30 <i>wine & oil</i> Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs Confessions 5:00 pm Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm | 31 OCF @ Clemson University 7:00 pm | 01 Forefeast of the Meeting of the Lord Vigil 6:00 pm | 02 The Meeting of the Lord in the Temple Divine Liturgy 8:00 am Confessions (following Vespers) Great Vespers 6:00 pm |

Fellowship and Coffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy
Church School: Sundays at 9:00 am before Divine Liturgy restarting January 13th
Inquirers' Classes: Wednesdays following Vespers --- as scheduled
Choir Rehearsal: Saturdays as scheduled, see times and dates above

Confessions: Wednesdays at 5:00 pm and Saturdays after Great Vespers, as scheduled above, and by appointment
Fr Marcus is available Sunday afternoons for House Blessings and by appointment after Jan 6th through Mar 2nd!

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.

Theophany Outdoor Great Blessing of Waters

Sunday, January 6th, 1:00 pm

At Falls Park in Downtown Greenville



Gather at the Tate Plaza entrance to Falls Park at 1:00 pm on Sunday, January 6th

At 1:00 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.

SC March for Life

On Saturday, January 12th, at 9:00 am several Orthodox Churches will meet in Columbia for Divine Liturgy at Holy Apostles Orthodox Church and then car pool to the University of SC campus and the SC Statehouse for the SC March for Life. Come help us make a strong witness to the sacredness of life.

For directions to Holy Apostles: www.holyapostles.org

A Word from the Desert

"A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him saying, 'You are mad, you are not like us'".

~~~ Ven Anthony the Great

### Ask the Priest????!!

On January 13<sup>th</sup>, during coffee hour, discussion will be led by Fr Marcus. All are welcomed and encouraged to attend. A box for questions has been placed in the hallway on the bookshelves for consideration at upcoming gatherings.

### 2007 Financial Update

|                       | Income    | Expenses  |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>YTD (thru Nov)</b> | \$130,405 | \$133,141 |
| <b>November</b>       | \$14,130  | \$11,885  |
| <b>Charity YTD</b>    | \$23,420  | \$20,254  |

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

### ■ ALMS SUNDAY CHARITY BRUNCH

January 13<sup>th</sup> is our Alms Sunday and Charity Brunch. Please remember to bring foodstuffs and personal items. Baskets are in the vestibule as you enter the church. These items are donated to United Ministries. More requests for assistance seem to come this time of year with the strains brought by higher fuel bills, the holidays, etc. United Ministries is especially asking for blankets. Thanks to all who continue to give so generously to our outreach efforts.

### ■ UPCOMING EVENTS --- PARISH MEETING, HOUSE BLESSINGS

- \* House Blessings begin after Theophany; outdoor Great Blessing of Waters (Reedy River) at Falls Park, Sunday, January 6<sup>th</sup> following the Divine Liturgy for Theophany - -- gather at Falls Park at 1:00 pm.
- \* Our annual parish meeting will take place on Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, following Divine Liturgy and a brief Coffee Hour.

a reminder ... and a hearty 'thankyou'!  
January Fellowship and Coffee Hour

|                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Jan 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Team 8                  |
| Jan 13 <sup>th</sup> | Charity Sunday (Team 4) |
| Jan 20 <sup>th</sup> | Team 1                  |
| Jan 27 <sup>th</sup> | Team 2                  |

Celebrating Birthdays and Anniversaries in January

Emily Simpson (2<sup>nd</sup>), Lynn Peelman (4<sup>th</sup>), David Eddins (5<sup>th</sup>), Mary Malushizky (9<sup>th</sup>), Alex Alexeff (12<sup>th</sup>), Monya Bock (21<sup>st</sup>), Donna Radich (24<sup>th</sup>), Georgia Pelinsky (30<sup>th</sup>), Georgia and Paul Pelinsky (30<sup>th</sup>)

### **Theophany**

'Wash, make yourselves clean,' says Isaiah. Put away the evil of your doings from before the Lord. Lo, everyone who thirsts, come to the living waters! For Christ will sprinkle with the water of renewal those who hasten to Him in faith, and He baptizes them with the Spirit into unaging life. ~~~ *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

**Love and humility make a holy team.**  
**The one exalts. The other supports those**  
**who have been exalted and never falls.**

~~~ St John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 25. ~~~

PLACE
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January 2008