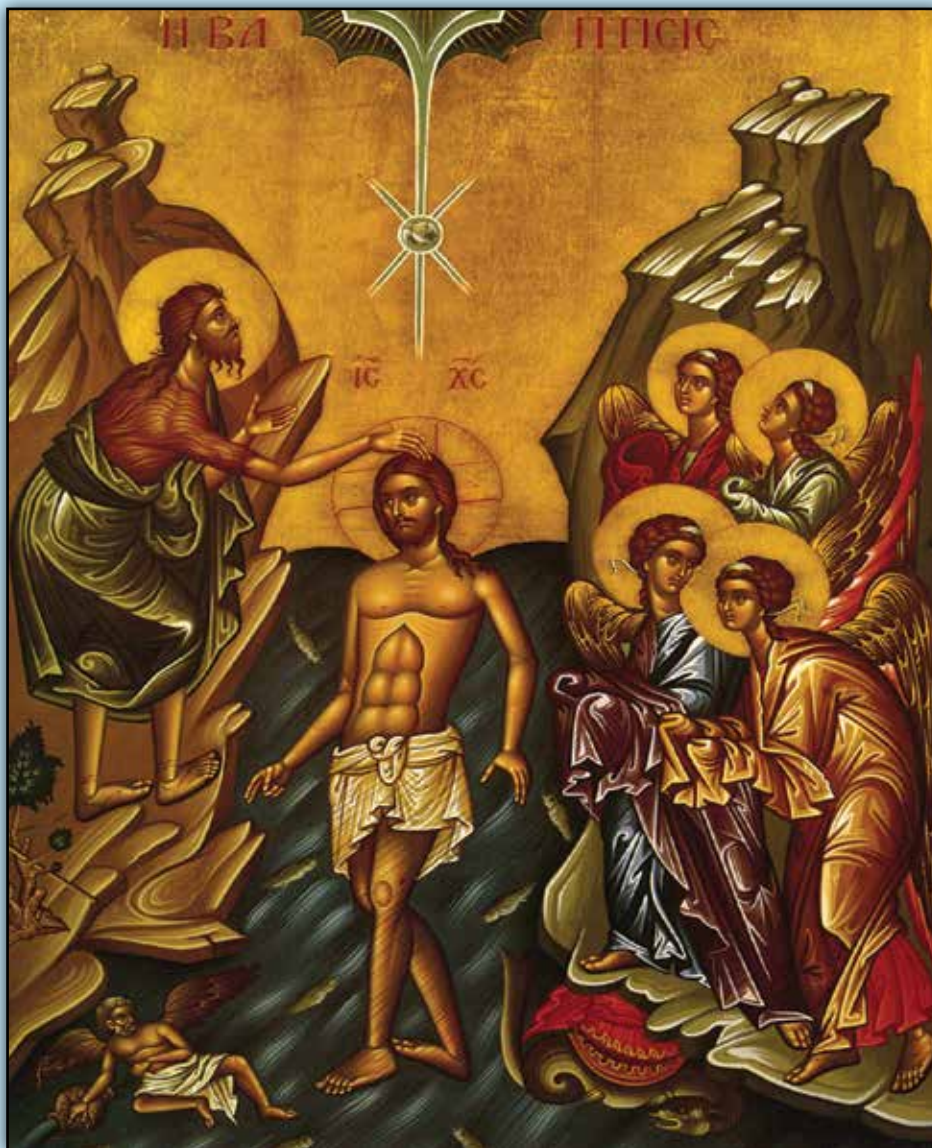


## SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY



*Icon of Theophany -- January 6th*

## January 1, 2023: Sunday Before Theophany

Epistle: 2 Tim. 4: 5-8

Gospel: Mk. 1; 1-8

<b>Mon., January 2</b>	9:00	+ Anna Mae Krisanda (Mary Ann Spryn)
<b>Tues., January 3</b>	9:00	+ Frank Cole (Carol)
<b>Wed., January 4</b>	9:00	+ Emmett & Zenia Hooper (Family)
<b>Thurs., January 5</b>	9:00	+ Marlene Nestor (Elaine & Paul Mazzoni)
<b>Fri., January 6</b>	9:00	<b>Theophany of Our Lord (Holy Day of Obligation)</b> For Our Parishioners
<b>Sat., January 7</b>	<b>No Morning Divine Liturgy; No Confessions</b> 2:00 pm Confessions 4:00 pm + Anne Kawa (Mary Ann & John Turko)	
<b>Sun., January 8</b>	10:30	For Our Parishioners

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As we look into 2023 we look at a block of time. We see 12 months, 52 weeks, 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes, 31,536,000 seconds. And all is a gift from God. We have done nothing to deserve it, earn it, or purchased it. Like the air we breathe, time comes to us as a part of life. The gift of time is not ours alone. It is given equally to each person. Rich and poor, educated

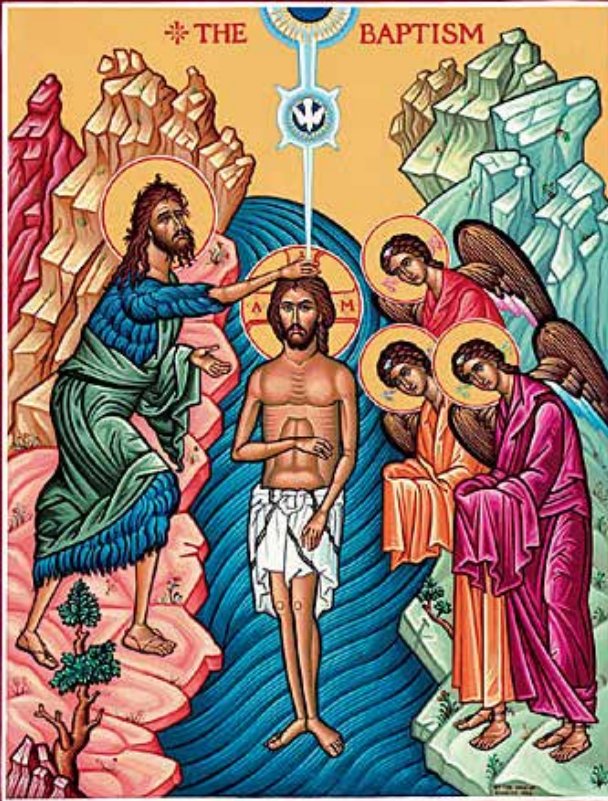


and ignorant, strong and weak — every man, woman and child has the same twentyfour hours every day. Another important thing about time is that you cannot stop it. There is no way to slow it down, turn it off, or adjust it. Time marches on. And you cannot bring back time. Once it is gone, it is gone. Yesterday is lost forever. If yesterday is lost, tomorrow

is uncertain. We may look ahead at a full year's block of time, but we really have no guarantee that we will experience any of it. Obviously, time is one of our most precious possessions. We can waste it. We can worry over it. We can spend it on ourselves. Or, as good stewards, we can invest it in the

kingdom of God. The new year is full of time. As the seconds tick away, will you be tossing time out the window, or will you make every minute count? I would like to wish you, your family and loved ones a Healthy and Blessed New Year!

## WHY DID JESUS ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE BAPTIZED?



John's baptism was not a baptism of salvation; it was a baptism of repentance for sinners. The Jews held a unique belief about repentance. This belief held that if Israel could repent perfectly for even one day, the Messiah would come. It was only the hardness of their hearts that was delaying the coming of God's Redeemer into the world. John was aware of this conviction, and his actions cemented his reputation as the forerunner of the Messiah.

An interesting feature of John's baptism was the fact that Jews did not need baptism. Only converts to

the Jewish religion were baptized. No Jew ever conceived that he or she, a member of the Chosen People, a son or daughter of Abraham assured of God's salvation, could ever need baptism. Yet Jews, after hearing John preach his message of repentance, were submitting to his baptism as a way of demonstrating their change of heart and of experiencing God's forgiveness of sins. When Jesus requested baptism from John, he wanted to demonstrate that he identified himself with his people's search for God.

Identifying with his people's sinfulness, Jesus allowed himself to

be baptized at the hands of John to demonstrate his solidarity with the people and to signal the beginning of the Messianic Age that John had promised. After Jesus' baptism, John's mission was accomplished and Jesus took center stage.

We know the rest of the story. Later, Jesus would commission his apostles to go baptize all nations. This baptism would not be a baptism of repentance but a baptism of water and the Spirit, which would signify that the baptized had found Jesus and were living in forgiveness and freedom.

## **WE ARE THE CHURCH**

So, why do we drag ourselves out of bed on Sunday mornings and make the trek to River Street? Habit? Obligation? Piety? Fulfillment? Our answers are often these and more, and may not be the same from week to week. It is also just as easy to do the contrary and stay home. Tired? Ill? Overcommitted? Angry? Newspaper and breakfast? There will always be a Liturgy again next week... These answers are equally varied and, at times, valid for those who are "absent with just cause," but they are more often easily rebutted.

Do we come for the beauty of the edifice, the icons, the hymnody, the sermon? While these are often pleasant, what we tend to forget is they are only external aspects of the Liturgy. Our presence at Church should not be solely for our emotional support, or even for working on our salvation, important though they are, but the simple fact that without our presence the Church ceases to be. The essence of the Church is the coming together of believers to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ our Savior, to join with Him, with the Saints, in



communion with other believers, with all that have gone before and all that will come, in a singular point of time – outside of time. And we do that not simply by attending, but by ACTIVE PARTICIPATION in the Divine Liturgy. The priests, the deacons, the choir and the people all contribute. The people say the word “I” in only two places in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom – the Creed and the Communion Prayer, everything else said by the people is as a corporate act. To be Christian is to be in the Community, in the Church and of the Church.

We have a weekly opportunity

to experience heaven on earth, to live momentarily in eternity “putting aside all earthly cares,” and to renew in ourselves a right spirit so that we may, by putting on Christ, be able to keep the faith, fight the good fight, and be the proper Christian example to our families, our friends and our community. And maybe, take one more step on that long journey toward heaven.

My dear parishioners, in the New Year of 2023, don’t just come for the services out of habit, don’t just come to Church – Be a part of the Church! God bless you and stay safe and healthy!

## WHICH CHRISTIAN ARE YOU?

Two runners prepare for a marathon. One prepares by racing over hills and down the highways and byways every day. He exercises, strengthening his legs. He runs further every day, building endurance.

The second runner prepares by sleeping two hours extra each day. He eats a lot and does nothing strenuous to upset the condition he feels he is in.

The day of the marathon race comes. The 26.2 mi. course lies just ahead of the runners at the starting line. The gun goes off; the race begins.

And guess who wins’? Of course, the first runner who has done the right kind of preparation.

Two Christians prepare for a difficult time ahead. The first spends each day praying and communicating with God. He follows David’s advice, committing to his memory the most helpful portions. And he keeps filled with the Spirit, adhering to Paul’s suggestion.

The second Christian reads the Bible, but only on Sunday morning when in church. He prays, but only

when he is at church or with the family at mealtime. And he thinks the preacher is right when he talks about being filled with the Holy Spirit. He hopes his children will someday be filled with the Spirit like he was when he was a youngster.

Then trouble strikes. The first Christian is prepared. He takes the difficulty in stride knowing God will help him through every aspect of it. Peace soon attains a column, assured, and deserved victory. The second Christian panics. He lashes out at God, at church, at friends, at family. He

doesn't know what God expects him to do. He doesn't have the assurance of the Word in his heart. He doesn't have the help of the Holy Spirit, the "friend who sticks closer than a brother." In desperation, after exhausting all other means of help, he remembers to cry to God for help. In time, God helps, because God loves...

And He hopes the man has learned a lesson. The first Christian wins an easy victory. The second wins an agonizing, prolonged victory that could have been so much easier. My friends, which Christian are you?

## **KEEP GREETING ONE ANOTHER**

A reminder to all: just as we prepared for Christmas with a 40-day preparation and fasting period, so now we celebrate the bright days of Christmas, New Year's, and Theophany for 40 days. Please continue to sing our beautiful Christmas carols, and to greet one another with our traditional "Christos Razhdayetsia! Slavite Yeho!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!" During the darkness of the Winter months, do all you can to keep the bright light of Christ burning brightly! Let Christ shine through you!

**Note:** according to tradition, we continue to sing Christmas carols up until the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord on February 2nd.

## **ST. CYRIL'S CHOIR CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT**

St. Cyril's Choir will put on a Christmas Carol Concert today (Sunday, January 1, 2023). This concert will be-

gin shortly after the conclusion of the 10:30 am Divine Liturgy.

## **CHRISTMAS CAROL SING ALONG**

YOU ARE INVITED to join Saints Peter & Paul Ukrainian Greek Catholic Parish for their 28th Christmas Carol Sing Along in the church on North River Street in Wilkes-Barre, Sunday, January 8th, 2023 starting at 2 p.m. Join in the singing of some very sacred, joyful and inspiring

Christmas Carols. Afterwards, please join us in the lower church hall for a Christmas Fellowship Social. Please bring a friend or family member, and share the joy of Christmas with them, as we welcome the Newborn Son of God into our hearts and homes.

## **2023 CHURCH CALENDARS**

The 2023 Church Calendars are available in back of the Church. The

Calendars are free, but any donations will be appreciated.

## **2022 CHURCH DUES**

With the end of 2022, we offer this gentle reminder to make sure that your 2022 Parish Dues are paid. Also, we remind our Parish Family Members that at a Parish Meeting in February

2020, it was decided that beginning 2021, Parish Dues would increase to \$50.00 per adult per year. This is less than \$1.00 per week.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Winter sometimes brings stormy weather. We ask our Parishioners to use good judgment and common sense not to drive when conditions are dangerous. As weather varies from

place to place, it may be that services will be held as scheduled, despite the fact that conditions in your area are difficult.

## **COLLECTION PROCESSING TEAM...**

The Collection Processing Team for the month of January 2023 is Team

#1: Jerry Sereditch, Michaelene Davis, and Gloria Jablonski.

**Sunday Collection for Dec. 24 - 26, 2022: \$**

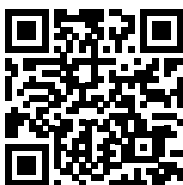
## Ss. Cyril & Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church

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Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor

### *The Christ*

Now, in the mystery of Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River, we again encounter and represent the truth of the Lord's incarnation and His manifestation as the Christ. Jesus' Baptism is in fact His definitive manifestation as the Messiah or Christ to Israel, and as the Son of the Father to the entire world. Here we find the dimension of the Epiphany which was His manifestation to all nations. The Father's voice from heaven shows that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove shows the Trinitarian nature of the Christian God. The true and unique God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shows Himself in Christ, through Him, with Him and in Him.

The Baptism in the Jordan returns to the great Christmas theme of "Christification", Jesus of Nazareth's spiritual anointing, His presentation

as the Anointed One par excellence, the Messiah or the One sent by the Father for the salvation of mankind. The Spirit that descended on Jesus shows and seals in an incontrovertible way the "Christification" of Jesus' humanity that the Word had already fulfilled from the first moment of His miraculous conception by Mary. Jesus, from the very beginning, was always the Lord's Christ, He was always God. Yet, His one, true humanity, that which is perfect in every way, as the Gospel records, constantly grew in natural and supernatural perfection. "And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and with men" (Lk2:52). In Israel at 30 years of age, one reached full maturity and therefore could become a master. Jesus came of age and the Spirit, descending and remaining on Him, definitively consecrated His whole being as the Christ.