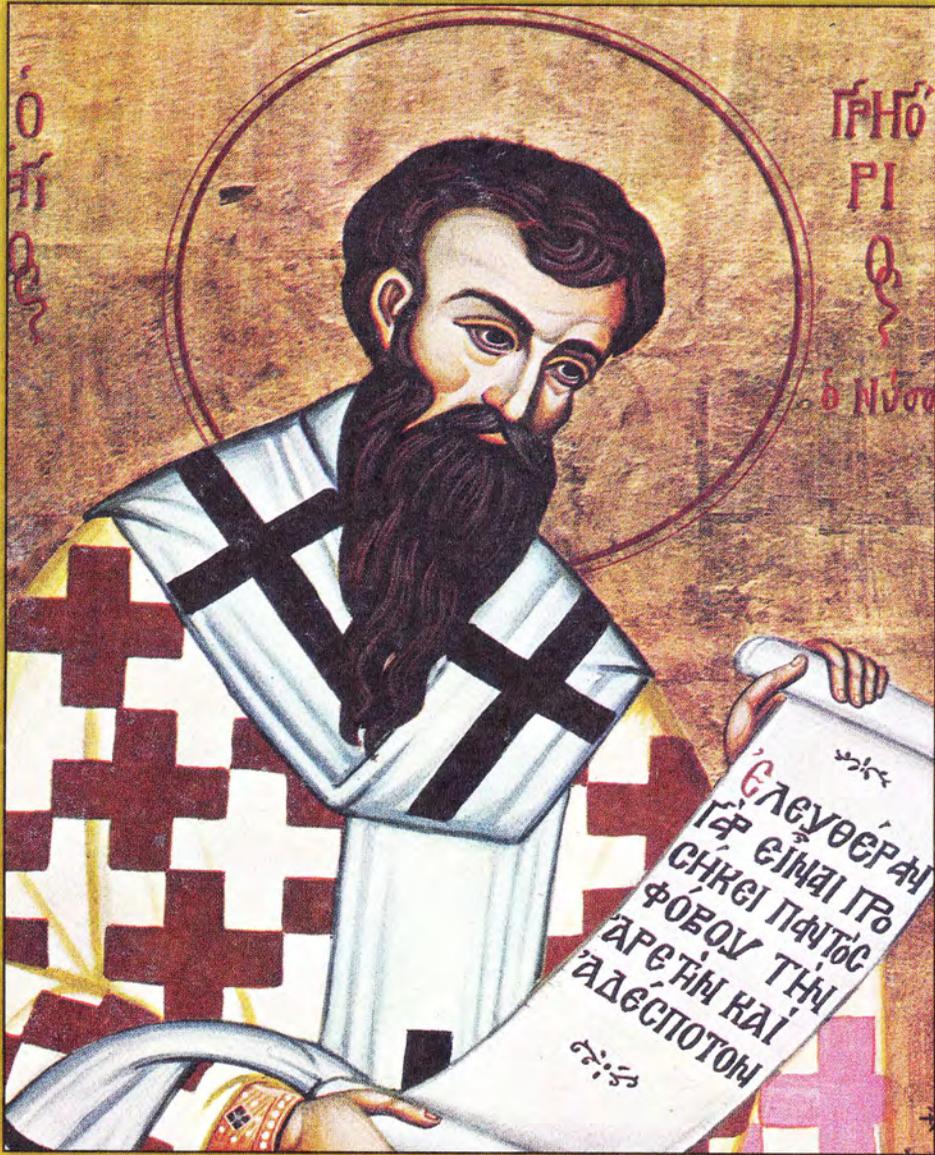


SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY



Icon of Saint Gregory of Nyssa -- January 10th



January 10, 2016

SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY – TONE 8

OUR HOLY FATHER GREGORY, BISHOP OF NYSSA
OUR VENERABLE FATHER DOMETIAN, BISHOP OF MELITENE;
OUR VENERABLE FATHER MARCIAN, PRESBYTER AND STEWARD
OF THE GREAT CHURCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 11 – JANUARY 17

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16 THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CHAINS OF THE HOLY AND ALL-
PRAISEWORTHY APOSTLE PETER

10:00 AM – Parastas +Rostyslav Chomiak (40th day); Req: Bankston Family

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17 – SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AN PHARISEE; OUR VENERABLE AND GOD-BEARING
FATHER ANTHONY THE GREAT

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily),
please stop and be attentive – будьмо уважли!*

2016 Liturgical Calendars are available in the parish hall. A special “Thank You” to *Goodbody Mortuary* for one again sponsoring our calendars. The calendar gives the appointed scriptures readings for each day of the year.

Read the scripture daily!

January Birthdays:

Nicholas Hirniak	–	1/7
Michael Miller	–	1/15
Mark Hartman	–	1/23
Susie Boyko	–	1/23
Ephrem Tooma	–	1/24
Iryna Khanyk	–	1/24
Christian Hartman	–	1/26
Colin Hartman	–	1/26
Xenia Moore	–	1/26

***Многая і благая літа!
Many blessed years!***

Looking Ahead:

- ❖ January 17th – Publican & Pharisee
- ❖ January 24th – Prodigal Son
- ❖ January 31st – Meatfare Sunday
- ❖ February 2nd – Encounter (Obligatory)
- ❖ February 7th – Cheesefare Sunday
- ❖ February 8th – The Great Fast begins



WHOEVER PRAYS FOR THOSE WHO HURT HIM LAYS THE DEMONS LOW; BUT HE WHO OPPOSES HIS AFFRONTER IS BOUND TO THE DEMONS.

– ST. MARK THE ASCETIC

THE NATIVITY SERMON OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

BEHOLD a new and wondrous mystery.

My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven.

He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

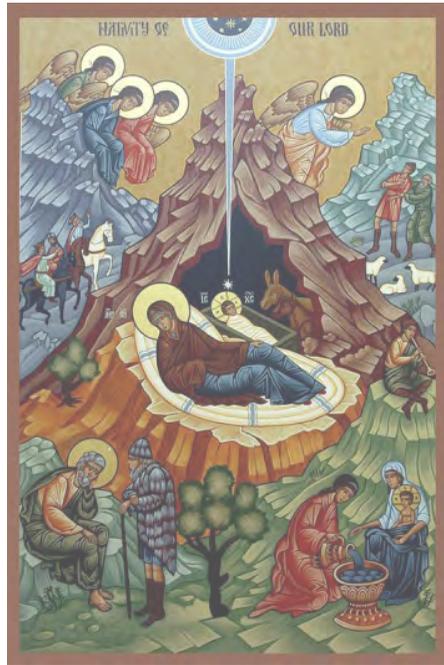
And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels,

nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Since this heavenly birth cannot be described, neither does His coming amongst us in these days permit of too curious scrutiny. Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth, and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech.

For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

What shall I say to you; what shall I tell you? I behold a Mother who has brought forth; I see a Child come to this light by birth. The manner of His conception I cannot comprehend.



Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that

which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unashamed of the lowliness of our nature.

For it was to Him no lowering to put on what He Himself had made. Let that handiwork be forever glorified, which became the cloak of its own Creator. For as in the first creation of flesh, man could not be made before the clay had come into His hand, so neither could this corruptible body be glorified, until it had first become the garment of its Maker.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infants bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly

wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infants food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.



Ch, Ch, Changes ... for a Spiritual Renewal

By Fr. Stelyios Muksuris *myocn.net*

As we enter yet another new year of the Lord's goodness, we hear from today's Gospel pericope, on this Sunday after Epiphany, a message of personal renewal: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). How appropriate, given this time of year, when people commit themselves to various kinds of personal and collective resolutions. Many persons resolve to lose more weight or to change bad habits such as smoking. Others plan to reconcile with people with whom they have had bitter arguments. Still others set personal financial goals, whether it is to make more money or invest more for their retirement or set aside adequate funds for college. Whatever the case, a new year can be an exciting time to make positive changes in one's life.

So what about this "changing of one's mind over to God", what the spiritual tradition of our Holy Orthodox Church calls *metanoia*, or "repentance"? Is this a resolution on our list or do we best relegate it to the period of Lent? In truth, **Holy Lent is not only the forty-day preparatory period for Great Week and Pascha, but it also serves as a model of ascetic living for how we should live daily, for every day and week culminates into the Feast of feasts, our Lord's Resurrection, which we celebrate each Sunday.** How we live our lives — the ways we think, the choices we make, and the behaviors we adopt — should be reflections of our Lord's life, in which seemingly bitter defeats end as victories. And the only way to experience the utter and sublime internal joyfulness of divine victory is to constantly renew our hearts over to God — through repentance.

As the Greek roots of the word indicate, *metanoia* is a voluntary and conscientious effort to change the abnormality of wrong thinking within us into the normality of right thinking. As Orthodox Christian Tradition teaches, the **demons are utterly powerless until they find a "host", a mind willing to entertain their nonsensical and whimsical suggestions [that is, temptations] and pass them as definitive reality.** In this way, man adopts a thinking completely foreign to him but very much enticing, which can lead him and especially others

to catastrophic and irreversible damage. A mind that rests comfortably in the remembrance and thought of God, however, has distanced itself from wrongful thoughts and has received divine grace and peace; it has changed its focus from oneself to the Lord and has spared itself the tragic insistence upon stress as a normal way of life. Man's heart is never at peace until he abides in the truth of God, until he changes his thoughts to reflect his true desires and expectations. St. Augustine of Hippo said it best when he prayed to God: "You have formed us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You" (*Confessions*, Book 1, Chapter 1).

We often think repentance means to apologize for a wrongful action or sin, or to feel remorse for what we have done. ***Metanoia* can never be confined to a sentiment; it is a dynamic action that involves not only one change, but several changes.** I submit to you three of these: **(1) a change in temperament and attitude; (2) a change of environment; and (3) a change in how we envision the world.** All these alterations contribute in changing the way we think and lead us to a more wholesome relationship with God. I would like to briefly address these three forms of *metanoia*.

We are surrounded by manifold viewpoints and policies that affect us, either positively or more commonly, negatively. For example, with the upcoming presidential elections, Americans are exposed to a hodgepodge of differing and often conflicting political platforms. All these inevitably form in us a particular temperament toward the candidates, rooted in our passion for or against them. On another note, we often tend to develop attitudes, either in school or at work, that can be judgmental if others do not agree with our opinions. In both these cases involving temperament and attitude, the common denominator is surely the definitive and absolute nature of our stance. No one is as right as we are, no one knows the issues or the problems better than we do. We live in the world according to Luke or Anna or Fr. Stel. **This is precisely what the demons want, namely, to make ourselves the point of reference.** We need to change our

temperament and attitude and realign our free will to God, not the other way around. In other words, we need to practice humility — another way of saying we need to accept the truth for what it is. And when we see how far away from the truth we have strayed, in all honesty, we can no longer live in the lie that is fueled and fed by the unnecessarily destructive and vain temperament and attitude we have adopted.

Secondly, *metanoia* often warrants a physical change of environment or scenery. This suggestion may seem odd but in fact there is much merit to it. It is very easy to become overly comfortable with our surroundings and the monotony of the sensory perceptions around us that are repeated. Certain sites tend to create in us either very pleasurable or very uneasy sentiments. In either case, we become overly familiar and comfortable with our surroundings and they inhibit our spiritual life, which requires us to focus not so much on context but on content. A beautiful home may be conducive to an enticing prayer life, but it can also prove a distraction when we strive with all our energy to maintain the beauty and functionality of the house, neglecting our focus on the centrality of prayer in our lives. Christ tells the labor-driven and overly-stressed Martha to follow her sister Mary's example and seek out the "one thing needful" (Luke 10:42). When we change our environment, we begin learning that location isn't everything; what we do at each and any location is what matters.

Finally, it is most pertinent that we learn to exercise tolerance toward other people who share our journey in this world. Diversities of all sorts abound not only from country to country but from neighbor to neighbor. Not everyone will agree with our belief system, and neither shall we agree with theirs. And that is fine because change can never be forced or imposed upon anyone. The world can never be how we imagine it to be, according to our own limited expectations. The exercise of openness and patience is, truthfully, an imitation of God's own incarnation, which we celebrated just a few weeks ago. Change of how we envision the world will lead us to respect and love others more because our preconceived notions, founded in the darkness of our ignorance (cf. Matthew 4:16), will dissipate as foul air and be replaced by the fragrant aroma of

our tolerant and compassionate love for one another. A change in how we think about the world will make us see a stranger as our brother and his fault as our opportunity to love him and redeem both himself and ourselves.

And why should we repent and so change ourselves this new year — indeed, every day and moment of our lives? Because the Kingdom of God is intensely before us at every moment. At every moment, Christ calls out to us to take the Kingdom by violence (cf. Matthew 11:12), with passionate resolve, faith, and courage. The opportunity here today may not be here tomorrow, so the immediacy of a sound decision is of primary importance. Encounters with God happen continuously but we remain oblivious to such "meetings", because of our lukewarm disposition and disinterestedness throughout life. **Nothing seems to burn brightly within us except a desire for pleasures and achievements that are short-lived. The Kingdom of God does not faze us; it is simply a myth, an afterthought for many.** At any moment within history, the grace of God, experienced as *kairos*, can penetrate into our limited reality and transform it back into the reality for which it was created, to be penetrated by God's presence. In order to experience this grace, to receive a taste of heaven, and to touch the garment of Christ like the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48) and so "touch" God, we need to adopt the thinking of Christ and so transform and expand our limited and erroneous thoughts. We need to repent — correct ourselves, be enlightened, and then unite ourselves to God.

Christ calls us all, brothers and sisters, to embrace the Kingdom of God at the beginning of this new year, to turn away from anything and everything that leads us away from the Lord and to redirect our steps toward the "One needful." He is as close to or as far away from us as we want Him to be. Let us change what needs to change within us, and let us hold on to what needs to be held onto, that this year may be the best year ever for us, in our individual and collective pilgrimages to the Kingdom of God.

A blessed and "changeful" New Year to us all!
Amen. (+)

THE ANTICHRIST

“The Antichrist will not be so called; otherwise he would have no followers. He will not wear red tights, nor vomit sulphur, nor carry a trident nor wave an arrowed tail as Mephistopheles in Faust. This masquerade has helped the Devil convince men that he does not exist. When no man recognizes, the more power he exercises. God has defined Himself as ‘I am Who am,’ and the Devil as ‘I am who am not.’

Nowhere in Sacred Scripture do we find warrant for the popular myth of the Devil as a buffoon who is dressed like the first ‘red.’ Rather is he described as an angel fallen from heaven, as ‘the Prince of this world,’ whose business it is to tell us that there is no other world. His logic is simple: if there is no heaven there is no hell; if there is no hell, then there is no sin; if there is no sin, then there is no judge, and if there is no judgment then evil is good and good is evil. But above all these descriptions, Our Lord tells us that he will be so much like Himself that he would deceive even the elect—and certainly no devil ever seen in picture books could deceive even the elect. How will he come in this new age to win followers to his religion?

The pre-Communist Russian belief is that he will come disguised as the Great Humanitarian; he will talk peace, prosperity and plenty not as means to lead us to God, but as ends in themselves. . . The third temptation in which Satan asked Christ to adore him and all the kingdoms of the world would be His, will become the temptation to have a new religion without a Cross, a liturgy without a world to come, a religion to destroy a religion, or a politics which is a religion—one that renders unto Caesar even the things that are God’s.

In the midst of all his seeming love for humanity and his glib talk of freedom and

equality, he will have one great secret which he will tell to no one: he will not believe in God. Because his religion will be brotherhood without the fatherhood of God, he will deceive even the elect. He will set up a counterchurch which will be the ape of the Church, because he, the Devil, is the ape of God. **It will have all the notes and characteristics of the Church, but in reverse and emptied of its divine content. It will be a mystical body of the Antichrist that will in all externals resemble the mystical body of Christ.”**

-Venerable Fulton Sheen

Sunday offering for January 3

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$27.00	1 (loose)
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	2
\$80.00	1
\$85.00	1
\$100.00	1
\$125.00	1
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1057.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1057.00

Average / parish household (42): \$13.55

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

Deficit: (\$1143.00)

Year-to-date deficit: (\$1143.00)

Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

Pastoral Council:

Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

Social Committee Chair:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

Finance Committee:

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

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La Mesa, CA 91941
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Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

Longing for Heaven

All the saints loved the dangers that proved their confidence in God. They offered no defense to those who wished in whatever way to wound or kill them; nor did they weaken in the face of any painful context that involved them in martyrdom and heroic deeds, because they looked for their reward in the kingdom of heaven.

In that hope Abraham obeyed the command to sacrifice his son; Moses toiled through the fearful desert; Elijah led his harsh life of solitude; and all the prophets, clad in the rough skins of sheep or goats, spent their days in affliction and mortification. For that reward the evangelists suffered wounds for the Gospel's sake, and martyrs strove against the tortures to which tyrants condemned them. Indeed whoever is truly a rational being and an image of God, and whose kinship is with the sublime and heavenly, has no

wish either to exist or to be raised from the dead in the company of those who will live again, unless he is to be praised by God as a good servant and thought worthy of some honors.

The same motive inspired David, who found in the deer's thirst an appropriate image of his own longing for God, and prayed that he might see the face of God, to enjoy his spiritual graciousness. Paul too prayed that when he had put off the flesh, like a heavy burdensome garment, he might depart and be with Christ. Both men certainly pictured in their minds that blessed and unchanging joy. But if there is no desire for the reward of heaven, then all else, as Ecclesiastes truly said, is "vanity of vanities."

St. Gregory of Nyssa

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