Theophany
January 6th, 2013
NEW YEAR, NEW CHALLENGES

Coming to the celebration of a new year, we look with hope and confidence to make ourselves better Christians and consequently to make our parish, St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox church, a better church. A church without growth is a church that becomes stagnant, a church which rejects the society in which she lives and its agents of change. One of the Church Fathers wrote that all of creation is in constant motion, moving towards God.

For us, as creatures created in the image and likeness of God endowed with reason and free will, it is extremely necessary to make a decision: to choose to move towards God or to move away from Him. By moving towards God we will come to know God as Our Father, because His Son paid the ransom for our sins and made it possible for us to share in His divinity. Getting closer to God we will witness His glory, we will experience a blessed earthly life, and will have the chance to taste the eternal life.

By moving away from God we will miss the opportunity to experience God as a benevolent Father, slipping into error and sin and eventually, coming to meet Him as a righteous Judge. Our arrogance does not permit us to see that the repeated sins lead to mockery of God: “But any who sin deliberately, whether they are natives or foreigners, are guilty of treating the Lord with contempt, and they shall be put to death, because they have rejected what the Lord said and have deliberately broken one of his commands. They are responsible for their own death.” (Num.15:30-31).

Seeking God half-heartedly might not help much either; seeking God must be an effort done willingly, with purpose and self-discipline. We find God both individually and through the Church. Both ways constitute one road, the road to the mansions of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is in the Church where we experience the communion with God through baptism and the Eucharist.

By the virtue of His divine sonship, Christ has the power to confer upon us adoption – a spiritual sonship. We become God’s children not by natural means, but by accepting God as Our Father. All people are precious to God as His beloved creatures, but only ones who believe in Christ and received the Holy Spirit are adopted as sons and daughters. In short, if we want to acquire salvation, we have to bring Christ in our daily lives.

Bringing Christ into our lives we have Him as our Lord as well as brother and friend. So “we will possess with Christ what God kept for him; for if we share Christ’s suffering, we will also share His glory” (Rom. 8:17). If we see any person as God’s creation and if we treat this creation with respect and compassion, we are bringing back the spirit of harmony which preceded the fall.

By consistently obeying the commandment “Love God with all your heart, soul, body, mind and strength” and to “love your neighbor us yourself”, we live and act in Christ. This commandment is the key to our physical and spiritual growth, both at an individual and corporate (church) level. Working consistently in this direction will enable our parish to grow continuously.

May God lead us and guide us in this upcoming year on the right path. May He shine the light of His countenance upon us and grant us peace. If we come to understand His teaching and experience even the smallest measure of His gifts, then all of us will be richly blessed and our future will hold great promise.

Happy New Year!
Χρόνια Πολλα και Ευτυχισμένος ο καινουργιος χρονος!

Fr. Vasile Mihai
Circumcision of the Lord
(January 1st)

Today we celebrate the great feast of the Circumcision of Christ and also the New Year by the Julian calendar and memory of Saint Basil the Great of Caesarea in Cappadocia.

The feast of the Circumcision is connected with an absolutely concrete event: according to the Old Testament law on the eight day after the birth of a male infant there had to be performed the circumcision of the foreskin – in commemoration of the testament between God and Abraham. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnated Son of God, didn’t need circumcision. His mission of saving humanity exceeded all that Abraham and all righteous men who had lived before Him and who had lived, lived and would live after the Nativity of Christ, had done. No circumcision could increase or decrease the importance of this mission or influence the cause being performed by the Lord.

Nevertheless, Jesus Christ took circumcision. And this circumstance makes us think over the importance of the rite and religious custom. The Circumcision was a rite according to which a man who took it, as if confirmed his connection with the Testament between God and Abraham. It was a visible sign to it. But didn’t all people who had been circumcised remain true to the commandment which God had given Abraham? Of course, not. And the sermon of the Saviour Himself testifies to it with all its power. The Saviour exposes the Scribes, the Pharisees and Hypocrites who carefully fulfilled all customs but in their hearts moved away from God and practically violated the Testament of God with Abraham. Thus, the Circumcision didn’t prevent a man from performing both bad deeds and even formal fulfilling the Old Testament law.

Why did the Lord take the Circumcision? He fulfilled this custom so that we could correctly understand what was the religious custom and the religious rite.

All of us having a body, feeling, mind, sight, intellect, smell, touch, live in this world and even the necessities of our soul we often realize bodily, because we can’t do it differently. A man can express and show himself through the action of the body, the movement of mind and will. And people also discover religious feeling, religious life physically. For example, we all have come to the church today. Each of us got up in the morning, got to this holy place, came into the church, crossed himself and began to pray. We all express spiritual movements, the movements of heart physically. And the custom including the church, religious custom is the form by means of which we express our religious feeling in such a way as we can express it being people physically connected with nature, with the world created by God.

But there is some danger in all this: in the consciousness of some people, especially those who got insufficient spiritual enlightenment, those who seldom read the World of God, patristic writings, those who don’t think over their faith, but simply got used to go to church, dangerous and incorrect attitude to the rites is being formed. They think that exact fulfillment of the rite saves a man and you needn’t do anything more. Moreover, you can take part in the rite being in the church, and at the same time push aside a man who is nearby you, and even here in the church offend your neighbors. Our confidence that formal action saves us automatically is dangerous delusion and a sin. We often think that if we come and put a candle, we will get automatically all we asked for.

We can’t get anything from God automatically. God gives us His grace, His power according to our faith and good deeds connected with our faith. It is this power that saves us, it is this power that overcomes our sins, as no human efforts and formal fulfillment of religious rules can overcome a sin. God gives us His grace which overcomes our sin. And attracting God’s grace, we can share it with others. When the grace is in abundance a man begins to share it with other people.

May God help us to increase in faith and piety. Let’s go to the church with reverence, fulfil church customs and rules knowing that it’s useful for soul and at the same time constantly think about our faith, read the Word of God, edify ourselves by it and in our practical life be guided by our faith, prayer and good deeds attracting to ourselves God’s grace which “heals weak people and fills up scarce ones”. Amen.

By Rev.George Sergeev
ST. BASIL THE GREAT

Earlier Life.

Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia; born at Caesarea, of a wealthy and pious family, circa 330; died there on January 1st, 379. He was somewhat younger than his friend, Gregory Nazianzen, and several years older than his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, who, with him, are known as the three great Cappadocians. The first years of his life Basil spent on a rural family estate under the guidance of his grandmother, Macrina, whom he always remembered with gratitude. He received his literary education at first in Caesarea, then at Constantinople, finally at the great school in Athens, where he became intimate with Gregory and the future emperor Julian.

The practical ideal of pure Christianity, the elevation of the soul above sensuality, the flight from the world, and the subjection of the body were already apparent in him. The family tendency to an ascetic life proved decisive after his return to Caesarea (c. 357). For a time, indeed, he acted as rhetor, but he resisted exhortations to devote himself to the education of youth. At this time he seems to have received baptism, and, after being received into the Church, he visited the famous ascetics in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.

To the dogmatic controversies which stirred the Church he paid no attention, though he deplored them. Upon his return to Caesarea he distributed his property among the poor and withdrew to a lonely romantic district, attracting like-minded friends to a monkish life, in which prayer, meditation, and study alternated with agriculture. Eustathius of Sebaste had already labored in Pontus in behalf of the anchoretic life and Basil revered him on that account, although the dogmatic differences, which then estranged so many hearts, gradually separated these two men also.

Siding from the beginning and at the Council of Constantinople in 360, with the Homoiousians, Basil went especially with those who overcame the aversion to the homoousios in common opposition to Arianism, thus drawing nearer to Athanasius. He also became a stranger to his bishop, Dianius of Caesarea, who had subscribed the Nicene form of agreement, and became reconciled to him only when the latter was about to die.

Presbyter and Bishop of Caesarea.

In 364 Basil was made a presbyter of the Church at Caesarea and as such opposed the new bishop Eusebius, who was not favorably disposed toward asceticism. For a time he again withdrew to solitude, but the increasing influence of Arianism induced him to devote his undivided strength to ecclesiastical affairs. He now appears as the real leader of the Church of Caesarea, and in directing the church discipline, in promoting monasticism and ecclesiastical asceticism, and especially by his powerful preaching, his influence grew.

His successful exertions during the famine in the year 368 are especially praised. After the death of Eusebius (370), Basil was elected bishop of Caesarea in spite of much opposition on dogmatic and personal grounds; even his friend Gregory felt offended. Occupying one of the most important episcopal sees of the East, Basil's influence on public affairs was now great. With all his might he resisted the emperor Valens, who strove to introduce Arianism, and impressed the emperor so strongly that, although inclined to banish the intractable bishop, he left him unmolested.
To save the Church from Arianism Basil entered into connections with the West, and with the help of Athanasius, he tried to overcome its distrustful attitude toward the Homoiousians. The difficulties had been enhanced by bringing in the question as to the essence of the Holy Spirit. Although Basil advocated objectively the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, he belonged to those, who, faithful to Eastern tradition, would not allow the predicate homoousios to the former; for this he was reproached as early as 371 by the Orthodox zealots among the monks, and Athanasius defended him. His relations also with Eustathius were maintained in spite of dogmatic differences and caused suspicion. On the other hand, Basil was grievously offended by the extreme adherents of Homoousianism, who seemed to him to be reviving the Sabellian heresy.

The end of the unhappy factional disturbances and the complete success of his continued exertions in behalf of Rome and the East, he did not live to see. He suffered from liver complaint and excessive asceticism made him old before his time and hastened his early death. A lasting monument of his episcopal care for the poor was the great institute before the gates of Caesarea, which was used as poorhouse, hospital, and hospice.

**Writings.**

Of Basil's writings, mention may be made of the dogmatic-polemical, including the books against Eunomius of Cyzicus entitled "Refutation of the Apology of the Impious Eunomius," written in 363 or 364; book 1 criticizes Arianism, books 2 and 3 defend the Homoousianism of the Son and the Spirit. The fourth and fifth books do not belong to Basil, or to Apollinaris of Laodicea, but probably to Didymus of Alexandria.

The work "On the Holy Spirit" also treats the questions of Homoousianism. Basil influenced the fixing of the terminology of the church-doctrine of the Trinity, though as concerns dogmatic acuteness and speculative power he is far behind Athanasius and his brother Gregory (of Nyssa).

The ascetic works *(ascetica)* are religio-ethical writings which acquaint us with the man who in a high degree labored for the naturalization of monasticism in the Church, and who at the same time exerted himself to regulate it in the cenobitic form and to make it fruitful also for the religious life of the cities.

Of the monastic rules traced to Basil, the Shorter Rule is most likely his work. The Long Rule is attributed to him but could not be unequivocally authored by Basil. Among the numerous homilies and orations, highly appreciated by the Early Church, some like that against usury and that on the famine in 368, are valuable for the history of morals; others illustrate the worship of martyrs and relics; the address to young men on the study of classical literature shows that Basil was lastingly influenced by his own education, which taught him to appreciate the educational importance of the classics. His homilies on the Hexaemeron were especially valued. The very numerous epistles are an important source of contemporaneous church history. His three "Canonical Epistles" give a clear idea of his efforts in behalf of church discipline.

The liturgies bearing the name of Basil, in their present form, are not his work, but they nevertheless preserve the true recollection of Basil's activity in this field in formularizing liturgical prayers and promoting church-song. A fruit of Basil's studies with his friend Gregory in their monastic loneliness is, finally, the *Philokalia*, an anthology *(florilegium)* from the works of Origen and Fathers of the Church. Numerous letters and homilies are translated in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7.

Text edited by Fr. Vasile Mihai
One of the most joyous traditional family celebrations is the cutting of the Vasilopeta on New Year's Day. On that day we celebrate the memory of St. Basil and in the same time we sense the thrill of anticipation to be the lucky one to find the coin, which will label the finder as the lucky person of the coming year.

This age-old tradition commenced in the fourth century, when St. Basil the Great, the father of philanthropy, wanted to distribute in discreet manner money to the poor in his Diocese. He commissioned some women to bake sweetened bread, in which he arranged to place gold coins. Thus the families not only nourished themselves but were also pleasantly surprised to find a gift of great value, the golden coin.

This event which happened in Cappadocia of Caesarea in the second half of the 4th century is very much alive in many Orthodox homes, on January the 1st. The head of the house will bless the Vasilopeta with the cutting knife, crosswise, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then he will cut the center of the bread and will offer it to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the first in our lives.

Then, the head of the house will make cuts from the center to the edges; the first cut wedge is dedicated to Theotokos (Virgin Mary), the next to St. Basil, then to himself, and then to all the members of his family and guests. The one who finds the coin in his or her piece is considered to be blessed for that year.

The custom of cutting the Vasilopeta in the homes eventually developed and changed into a public event in the Church. On January the 1st, or on the nearest Sunday, the Service of Cutting the Vasilopeta takes place. The Service starts with 'Blessed is our God, now and always and to the ages of ages', continues with the Apolytikion of St. Basil and the Kontakion of the Indiction. Then a set of petitions are intoned, starting with the ones which are chanted on every Sunday, and then some more specific petitions are added; we pray that the New Year may be 'a year of peace and redemption', we pray for abundant mercy for those who brought the Vasilopetes and the members of their families.

A prayer and the dismissal will conclude the Service; then the Cutting of the Vasilopeta takes place. The procedure of cutting is the same, only that the wedges are dedicated to the following: Christ and the Church, Theotokos, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Archbishop Demetrios, Metropolitan Alexios, Parish Council, Philoptochos, Sunday School, Psaltes, Choir, Altar Boys, GOYA, JOY, AHEPA, Daughters, OPA dancers, etc. The leaders of these organizations receive the bread in the name of their organizations.

Then the other Vasilopetes (each having its own coin) are cut and distributed to the congregation. In some churches the pieces of bread are distributed after a process of bidding, and so money is being raised for the St. Basil Academy, in Garrison, New York.

If you would like to bake for yourselves, here are some hints:

**Ingredients:** 2 cups (1 pound) unsalted butter, 1 cup vegetable oil, 5 cups sugar, 12 eggs, separated, 4 teaspoons vanilla extract, 1/2 cup sugar, on the side, 6 cups flour, 4 teaspoons baking powder, 4 teaspoons baking soda, 2 teaspoons salt, 1 1/2 cups plain yogurt, 2 cups crushed, toasted almonds.

**Instructions:** Cream butter, oil, and 5 cups sugar sugar for 10 minutes. Add yolks and flavorings, beat until fluffy; Alternate adding all dry ingredients (except salt) and yogurt; In separate bowl, beat whites and salt until foamy. Add 1/2 cup sugar. Beat until stiff meringue forms. Fold into 1st mixture so it stays fluffy; Pour into greased pan 16 x 11-inch or 14-inch round pan. Add sliced almonds on top. Bake at 325 degrees F for 15 minutes, then add coin. Continue baking for additional 30 minutes.
Discourse On the Day of the Baptism of Christ

St. John Chrysostom

We shall now say something about the present feast. Many celebrate the feastdays and know their designations, but the cause for which they were established they know not. Thus concerning this, that the present feast is called Theophany — everyone knows; but what this is — Theophany, and whether it be one thing or another, they know not. And this is shameful — every year to celebrate the feastday and not know its reason.

First of all therefore, it is necessary to say that there is not one Theophany, but two: the one actual, which already has occurred, and the second in future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world. About this one and about the other you will hear today from Paul, who in conversing with Titus, speaks thus about the present: "The grace of God hath revealed itself, having saved all mankind, decreeing, that we reject iniquity and worldly desires, and dwell in the present age in prudence and in righteousness and piety" — and about the future: "awaiting the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:11-13). And a prophet speaks thus about this latter: "the sun shall turn to darkness, and the moon to blood at first, then shall come the great and illuminating Day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31).

Why is not that day, on which the Lord was born, considered Theophany — but rather this day on which He was baptized? This present day it is, on which He was baptized and sanctified the nature of water. Because on this day all, having obtained the waters, do carry it home and keep it all year, since today the waters are sanctified; and an obvious phenomenon occurs: these waters in their essence do not spoil with the passage of time, but obtained today, for one whole year and often for two or three years, they remain unharmed and fresh, and afterwards for a long time do not stop being water, just as that obtained from the fountains.

Why then is this day called Theophany? Because Christ made Himself known to all — not then when He was born — but then when He was baptized. Until this time He was not known to the people. And that the people did not know Him, Who He was, listen about this to John the Baptist, who says: "Amidst you standeth, Him Whom ye know not of" (Jn.1:26). And is it surprising that others did not know Him, when even the Baptist did not know Him until that day? "And I — said he — knew Him not: but He that did send me to baptize with water, about This One did tell unto me: over Him that shall see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, This One it is Who baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 1:33). Thus from this it is evident, that — there are two Theophanies, and why Christ comes at baptism and on whichever baptism He comes, about this it is necessary to say: it is therefore necessary to know both the one and equally the other.

And first it is necessary to speak your love about the latter, so that we might learn about the former. There was a Jewish baptism, which cleansed from bodily impurities, but not to remove sins. Thus, whoever committed adultery, or decided on thievery, or who did some other kind of misdeed, it did not free him from guilt. But whoever touched the bones of the dead, whoever tasted food forbidden by the law, whoever approached from contamination, whoever consorted with lepers — that one washed, and until evening was impure, and then cleansed. "Let one wash his body in pure water — it says in the Scriptures, — and he will be unclean until evening, and then he will be clean" (Lev 15:5, 22:4). This was not truly of sins or impurities, but since the Jews lacked perfection, then God, accomplishing it by means of this greater piety, prepared them by their beginnings for a precise observance of important things.

Thus, Jewish cleansings did not free from sins, but only from bodily impurities. Not so with ours: it is far more sublime and it manifests a great grace, whereby it sets free from sin, it cleanses the spirit and bestows the gifts of the Spirit. And the baptism of John was far more sublime than the Jewish, but less so than ours: it was like a bridge between both baptisms, leading across itself from the first to the last. Wherefore John did not give guidance for observance of bodily purifications, but together with them he
exhorted and advised to be converted from vice to good deeds and to trust in the hope of salvation and the accomplishing of good deeds, rather than in different washings and purifications by water.

John did not say: wash your clothes, wash your body, and ye will be pure, but what? — “bear ye fruits worthy of repentance” (Mt 3:8). Since it was more than of the Jews, but less than ours: the baptism of John did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness by grace: it gave the commandment to repent, but it was powerless to absolve sins. Wherefore John did also say: “I baptize you with water...That One however will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Mt 3:11). Obviously, he did not baptize with the Spirit. But what does this mean: “with the Holy Spirit and with fire?” Call to mind that day, on which for the Apostles “there appeared disparate tongues like fire, and sat over each one of them” (Acts 2:3).

And that the baptism of John did not impart the Spirit and remission of sins is evident from the following: Paul "found certain disciples, and said to them: received ye the Holy Spirit since ye have believed? They said to him: but furthermore whether it be of the Holy Spirit, we shall hear. He said to them: into what were ye baptized? They answered: into the baptism of John. Paul then said: John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance," — repentance, but not remission of sins; for whom did he baptize? "Having proclaimed to the people, that they should believe in the One coming after him, namely, Christ Jesus.

Having performed also the second, he shew the superiority of the apostolic Baptism and that the baptism of John was far less than his. Thus, from this we recognize the difference of the baptisms.

Now it is necessary to say, for whom was Christ baptized and by which baptism? Neither the former the Jewish, nor the last — ours. Whence hath He need for remission of sins, how is this possible for Him, Who hath not any sins? "Of sin, — it says in the Scriptures, — worked He not, nor was there deceit found in His mouth" (1 Pet 2:22); and further, "who of you convicted Me of Sin?” (Jn 8:46). And His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit; how might this be possible, when it in the beginning was fashioned by the Holy Spirit? And so, if His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit, and He was not subject to sins, then for whom was He baptized? But first of all it is necessary for us to recognize, by which baptism He was baptized, and then it will be clear for us. By which baptism indeed was He baptized? — Not the Jewish, nor ours, nor John’s.

For whom, since thou from thine own aspect of baptism dost perceive, that He was baptized not by reason of sin and not having need of the gift of the Spirit; therefore, as we have demonstrated, this baptism was alien to the one and to the other. Hence it is evident, that He came to Jordan not for the forgiveness of sins and not for receiving the gifts of the Spirit. But so that some from those present then should not think, that He came for repentance like others, listen to how John precluded this. What he then spoke to the others then was: "Bear ye fruits worthy of repentance"; but listen what he said to Him: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and Thou art come to me?” (Mt 3:8, 14). With these words he demonstrated, that Christ came to him not through that need with which people came, and that He was so far from the need to be baptized for this reason — so much more sublime and perfectly purer than Baptism itself.

[On this day] We should approach the Holy Sacrifice with great decorum, with proper piety, so as to merit us more of God's benevolence, to cleanse one's soul and to receive eternal blessings, of which may we all be worthy by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to with Whom the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, and worship now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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“Matthew alone adds the words, "to repentance,” teaching us that the benefit of baptism is connected with the intension of the baptized person. To him who repents, it is saving. However, to him who comes to it without repentance, it will produce greater condemnation. Origen, 9.367
Icons of the Baptism of the Lord are an exact reproduction of this Gospel testimony, with the addition of details corresponding to the divine service of the day, as for instance, angels and allegorical figures at the feet of the Savior. The festival of the Baptism is also called Epiphany, since Baptism is the manifestation of the Divinity of Christ, when He openly begins His service to redeem the world. “It is not the day when Christ was born that should be called Epiphany”, says St. John Chrysostom, “but the day when He was baptized. Not through His birth He became known to all, but through His baptism. Before the day of Baptism He was not known to the people.”

In accordance with the Gospel text cited above, in the upper part of the icon there is a segment of a circle symbolizing the opening heavens “which Adam had closed for himself and his descendants, just as he had closed the Garden of Eden by the flaming sword.” This segment of circle signifies the presence of God, which sometimes is emphasized still more by a hand, blessing. Thence are shed upon the Savior rays of light, with the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. The Holy Spirit is depicted in the same manner as in the Nativity of Christ, except that a white dove takes place of the star.

The Holy fathers of the Church explain the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the Lord’s Baptism by analogy with the Flood: just as then the world was purified of its iniquities by the waters of the Flood and the dove brought an olive branch into Noah’s Ark, announcing the end of the Flood and peace returned upon earth, so too now the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove to announce the remission of sins and God’s mercy to the world. “There an alive branch, here the mercy of God”, says St. John of Damascus.

To sanctify the waters for our purification and renewal, He Who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world “is covered by the waters of Jordan”, according to the hymns of the festival. In the symbolical language of the icon this is expressed by the fact that the Savior is represented standing, as it were, against a background of water, as though in a cave. This gives us to understand that not a part of His body, but His whole body is immersed in token of His burial, for Baptism signifies the death of the Lord (Col. 2:12).

Ad a sign of the fact that here the initiative belongs to Him, that He, the Master, came to the servant and asked to be baptized, the Savior is almost always represented as walking and making a movement towards John the Forerunner, at the same time bending His head beneath John’s arm. With His right arm He blesses the waters of Jordan, which cover Him, sanctifying them by His immersion. From then onwards water becomes and image not of death but of birth into a new life.

Although some images show the Savior with a cloth binding His loins, the majority of the icons show Him quite naked, in accordance with the texts of the Divine services. This also emphasizes the kenosis of His Divinity. “He strips Himself, Who clothes the heavens with clouds.” It also shows the purpose of kenosis for, by stripping His body, He thereby clothes the nakedness of Adam, and with Him that of the whole of mankind, in the garment of glory and incorruptibility.

The icon of the Baptism is one of those which have the greatest number of analogies with the Old Testament prefigurations. Thus, in addition to those mentioned, two small figures are usually represented at the feet of the Savior, among the fish swimming in the waters of Jordan. One of them is that of a man, naked, turning his back to Him; the other that of a woman, half-naked usually running away, at times riding a fish. These details illustrate the Old Testament texts, which enter into the divine service of the festival, and are a prophetic prefiguration of baptism. “The sea saw and fled; Jordan was turned back” (Ps. 113:3). The male figure – an allegory of Jordan – is explained by the following text: “Elisha turned back the river Jordan with the mantle, when Elijah had been taken up, and the waters were divided hither and thither; and the bed of the river was to Elisha a dry pathway, as a true type of baptism, by which we pass through the changing course of life.” The female figure is an allegory of the sea and refers to the other prefiguration of Baptism – the crossing of the Red Sea by the Jews.

St. John the Forerunner officiates, his right hand placed on the head of the Savior. This sacramental gesture has always been part of the ritual of baptism. In his left hand he sometimes holds a scroll, the symbol of his preaching, or as in our icon, makes a gesture of prayer to express the trembling which seized him. “…I do not dare to hold Thy most pure head; sanctify Thou me, O Lord, by Thy divine manifestation.”

Angels take part in the holy ritual. Texts of the Divine services, mentioning their presence, speak of their state: “The choirs of angels were full of wonder, fear and joy.” But they do not speak of the role they played. So their role is often understood and represented differently. Sometimes, especially in the later icons, they hold cloaks in their hands, evidently playing the role of the attendants during Baptism and ready to cover the body of the Lord as He comes out of the water. But as a rule here, as in the icons of other feasts, their role of service is merely indicated. They are represented with their hands covered by their own cloaks as a sign of reverence before Him Whom they serve.

[Adapted from The Meaning of the Icons by Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, pp.164-165].
Anthony the Great or Antony the Great (ca. 251–356), also known as Saint Anthony, or 'Anthony of Egypt', Anthony the Abbot, Anthony of Thebes, Abba Antonius (Ἀββᾶς Ἀντώνιος), and Father of All Monks, was a Christian saint from Egypt, a prominent leader among the Desert Fathers.

St. Anthony was born into a wealthy family. When his parents died, he and his sister shared their wealth. Since the sister was a minor, he made sure she was cared for and then gave away all his portion of the inheritance to the poor and went into the desert to live the life of asceticism. St. Anthony had taken to heart the words of the Lord: "...sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21).

Many people imitated his example; they went and lived close to him, thus "populating the desert." St. Anthony is considered the Father of Orthodox Monasticism, for his kind of monasticism, that of "living alone with God as his only companion", remained the most cherished monastic ideal for the monks of the Christian Orthodox Church throughout the ages.

Though few of us are called to follow the monastic life, each of us is capable of emulating the example of stewardship shown by the life of St. Anthony the Great. In his life we see a person with great faith and the dedication to follow the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; he is a man who loves, honors, and respects his parents; he shows a loving concern for his sister; we recognize his humility to give all he possesses to help the poor; and we witness a spiritual giant who teaches:

"Learn to desire humility, for that will cover your sins. All sin is hateful to God, but the most hateful of all is pride of heart. Do not consider yourself learned or wise, or all your toil will be lost and your ship will arrive empty at the shore...If you have great power, threaten no man with death; know that according to nature you also are subject to death and that each soul takes off its body as its final clothing."

The biography of Anthony's life (Vita Antoni—Life of St. Anthony) by St. Athanasius of Alexandria helped to spread the concept of monasticism, particularly in Western Europe through Latin translations. He is often erroneously considered the first monk, but as his biography and other sources make clear, there were many ascetics before him. Anthony was, however, the first known ascetic going into the wilderness (about A.D. 270–271, Libyan Desert), a geographical move that seems to have contributed to his renown.

Life of St. Anthony

Birth and beginnings of Antony.

1. Antony you must know was by descent an Egyptian: his parents were of good family and possessed considerable wealth, and as they were Christians he also was reared in the same Faith. In infancy he was brought up with his parents, knowing nought else but them and his home. But when he was grown and arrived at boyhood, and was advancing in years, he could not endure to learn letters, not caring to associate with other boys; but all his desire was, as it is written of Jacob, to live a plain man at home. Genesis 25:27 With his parents he used to attend the Lord's House, and neither as a child was he idle nor when older did he despise them; but was both obedient to his father and mother and attentive to to what was read, keeping in his heart what was profitable in what he heard. And though as a child brought up in moderate affluence, he did not trouble his parents for varied or luxurious fare, nor was this a source of pleasure to him; but was content simply with what he found nor sought anything further.
2. After the death of his father and mother he was left alone with one little sister: his age was about eighteen or twenty, and on him the care both of home and sister rested. Now it was not six months after the death of his parents, and going according to custom into the Lord's House, he communed with himself and reflected as he walked how the Apostles Matthew 4:20 left all and followed the Saviour; and how they in the Acts Acts 4:35 sold their possessions and brought and laid them at the Apostles' feet for distribution to the needy, and what and how great a hope was laid up for them in heaven. Pondering over these things he entered the church, and it happened the Gospel was being read, and he heard the Lord saying to the rich man Matthew 19:21, 'If you would be perfect, go and sell that you have and give to the poor; and come follow Me and you shall have treasure in heaven.' Antony, as though God had put him in mind of the Saints, and the passage had been read on his account, went out immediately from the church, and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers— they were three hundred acres, productive and very fair— that they should be no more a clog upon himself and his sister. And all the rest that was movable he sold, and having got together much money he gave it to the poor, reserving a little however for his sister's sake.

His early ascetic life.

3. And again as he went into the church, hearing the Lord say in the Gospel Matthew 6:34, 'be not anxious for the morrow;' he could stay no longer, but went out and gave those things also to the poor. Having committed his sister to known and faithful virgins, and put her into a convent to be brought up, he henceforth devoted himself outside his house to discipline, taking heed to himself and training himself with patience. For there were not yet so many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk at all knew of the distant desert; but all who wished to give heed to themselves practiced the discipline in solitude near their own village. Now there was then in the next village an old man who had lived the life of a hermit from his youth up. Antony, after he had seen this man, imitated him in piety. And at first he began to abide in places outside the village: then if he heard of a good man anywhere, like the prudent bee, he went forth and sought him, nor turned back to his own palace until he had seen him; and he returned, having got from the good man as it were supplies for his journey in the way of virtue. So dwelling there at first, he confirmed his purpose not to return to the abode of his fathers nor to the remembrance of his kinsfolk; but to keep all his desire and energy for perfecting his discipline. He worked, however, with his hands, having heard, 'he who is idle let him not eat 2 Thessalonians 3:10,' and part he spent on bread and part he gave to the needy. And he was constant in prayer, knowing that a man ought to pray in secret unceasingly. For he had given such heed to what was read that none of the things that were written fell from him to the ground, but he remembered all, and afterwards his memory served him for books.

4. Thus conducting himself, Antony was beloved by all. He subjected himself in sincerity to the good men whom he visited, and learned thoroughly where each surpassed him in zeal and discipline. He observed the graciousness of one; the unceasing prayer of another; he took knowledge of another's freedom from anger and another's loving-kindness; he gave heed to one as he watched, to another as he studied; one he admired for his endurance, another for his fasting and sleeping on the ground; the meekness of one and the long-suffering of another he watched with care, while he took note of the piety towards Christ and the mutual love which animated all. Thus filled, he returned to his own place of discipline, and henceforth would strive to unite the qualities of each, and was eager to show in himself the virtues of all. With others of the same age he had no rivalry; save this only, that he should not be second to them in higher things. And this he did so as to hurt the feelings of nobody, but made them rejoice over him. So all they of that village and the good men in whose intimacy he was, when they saw that he was a man of this sort, used to call him God-beloved. And some welcomed him as a son, others as a brother.

Details of his life at this time (271-285?)

7. . This was Antony's first struggle against the devil, or rather this victory was the Saviour's work in Antony, 'Who condemned sin in the flesh that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.' But neither did Antony, although the evil one had fallen, henceforth relax his care and despise him; nor did the enemy as though conquerer cease to lay snares for him. For again he went round as a lion seeking some occasion against him.
But Antony having learned from the Scriptures that the devices of the devil are many, zealously continued the discipline, reckoning that though the devil had not been able to deceive his heart by bodily pleasure, he would endeavour to ensnare him by other means. For the demon loves sin. Wherefore more and more he repressed the body and kept it in subjection, lest haply having conquered on one side, he should be dragged down on the other. He therefore planned to accustom himself to a severer mode of life. And many marvelled, but he himself used to bear the labour easily; for the eagerness of soul, through the length of time it had abode in him, had wrought a good habit in him, so that taking but little initiation from others he showed great zeal in this matter. He kept vigil to such an extent that he often continued the whole night without sleep; and this not once but often, to the marvel of others. He ate once a day, after sunset, sometimes once in two days, and often even in four. His food was bread and salt, his drink, water only. Of flesh and wine it is superfluous even to speak, since no such thing was found with the other earnest men. A rush mat served him to sleep upon, but for the most part he lay upon the bare ground. He would not anoint himself with oil, saying it behooved young men to be earnest in training and not to seek what would enervate the body; but they must accustom it to labour, mindful of the Apostle's words 2 Corinthians 12:10, 'when I am weak, then am I strong.' 'For,' said he, 'the fibre of the soul is then sound when the pleasures of the body are diminished.' And he had come to this truly wonderful conclusion, 'that progress in virtue, and retirement from the world for the sake of it, ought not to be measured by time, but by desire and fixity of purpose.' He at least gave no thought to the past, but day by day, as if he were at the beginning of his discipline, applied greater pains for advancement, often repeating to himself the saying of Paul Philippians 3:14: 'Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before.' He was also mindful of the words spoken by the prophet Elias 1 Kings 18:15, 'the Lord lives before whose presence I stand today.' For he observed that in saying 'today' the prophet did not compute the time that had gone by: but daily as though ever commencing he eagerly endeavoured to make himself fit to appear before God, being pure in heart and ever ready to submit to His counsel, and to Him alone. And he used to say to himself that from the life of the great Elias the hermit ought to see his own as in a mirror.

Of his sickness and his last will. 91. But he, knowing the custom, and fearing that his body would be treated this way, hastened, and having bidden farewell to the monks in the outer mountain entered the inner mountain, where he was accustomed to abide. And after a few months he fell sick. Having summoned those who were there— they were two in number who had remained in the mountain fifteen years, practising the discipline and attending on Antony on account of his age— he said to them, 'I, as it is written Joshua 23:14, go the way of the fathers, for I perceive that I am called by the Lord. And do you be watchful and destroy not your long discipline, but as though now making a beginning, zealously preserve your determination. For you know the treachery of the demons, how fierce they are, but how little power they have. Wherefore fear them not, but rather ever breathe Christ, and trust Him. Live as though dying daily. Give heed to yourselves, and remember the admonition you have heard from me. Have no fellowship with the schismatics, nor any dealings at all with the heretical Arians. For you know how I shunned them on account of their hostility to Christ, and the strange doctrines of their heresy. Therefore be the more earnest always to be followers first of God and then of the Saints; that after death they also may receive you as well-known friends into the eternal habitations. Ponder over these things and think of them, and if you have any care for me and are mindful of me as of a father, suffer no one to take my body into Egypt, lest haply they place me in the houses, for to avoid this I entered into the mountain and came here. Moreover you know how I always put to rebuke those who had this custom, and exhorted them to cease from it. Bury my body, therefore, and hide it underground yourselves, and let my words be observed by you that no one may know the place but you alone. For at the resurrection of the dead I shall receive it incorruptible from the Saviour. And divide my garments. To Athanasius the bishop give one sheepskin and the garment whereon I am laid, which he himself gave me new, but which with me has grown old. To Serapion the bishop give the other sheepskin, and keep the hair garment yourselves. For the rest fare ye well, my children, for Antony is departing, and is with you no more.'

In the Orthodox Church, the day after Theophany we celebrate the memory of St. John the Baptist. It is appropriate to do so as Jesus Christ and John the Baptist represent two lines moving toward one another – one moving from below and another descending from above. The lines would intersect in the river Jordan on the day of Theophania, when John answered to Jesus’ call for the baptism with, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” (Matt. 3:14).

Before Christ began his mission, John the Baptist, known as the “Forerunner” of the Messiah, made a public appeal to morality and repentance. That action undoubtedly helped with setting the mood for the reception of Christ’s teachings.

It was in the year 27 AD, in the reign of Tiberius, when John chose the rather hostile region of Judea, as place of his ministry and baptism. John’s main purpose was to teach people about the Kingdom and the need of repentance as preparation for admission into it.

It was through humility and love that John the Baptist would be found worthy to baptize in water the One who didn’t need baptism, for Him was sinless. And it was through humility and love that God Himself lowered Himself to the level of the creation of His hands, and to receive baptism from John.

John heard the call to blessedness from an early age and he did not hesitate to offer himself to God. He responded with vigor and love, leaving aside all the “earthly cares” and becoming a servant of God in the wilderness. John the Baptist lived a life of true prayer, a life in which he listens to people rather than to talk to them; so he was able to hear the voice of God calling him to the divine mission of preparing the way for the Messiah.

John’s wonderful deeds attracted the attention of Herod and his henchmen; they threw him in the famous jail called Machaerus and eventually beheaded him at the order of Herod Antipas. According to St. Luke, the body of the Baptist was buried in Sebasteia in Samaria. The Samaritans venerated his relics and allowed St. Luke to take with him the right hand of the Baptist.

This holy relic was brought to Antioch by St. Luke and a chapel was erected in memory of St. John, and also to house the relic. For more than 800 years Christians from all Christendom came in pilgrimage to this site and many of them received miraculous cures.

In the eighth century the relic was transferred to Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Cathedral in Constantinople, where it remained until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. After the fall, the relic was transferred to the Holy Monastery Dionysiou, on Mount Athos, where it can be seen and venerated by all Christians.

Fr. Vasile Mihai

John was a prophet among your [Jewish] nation. After him, no other prophet appeared among you. Justin Martyr (c. 160), 1.219
St. Gregory the Theologian
(February 25)

St. Gregory the Theologian was born in 329 AD in Arianzus, a village of the second district of Cappadocia, not far from Nazianzus. His father, who later became Bishop of Nazianzus, was named Gregory (commemorated on Jan. 1st), and his mother was named Nonn (Aug. 5th); both are among the saints, and so are his brother Caesarius (March 9th) and his sister Gorgonia (Feb. 23rd).

At first he studied in Caesarea of Palestine, then in Alexandria, and finally in Athens. As he was sailing from Alexandria to Athens, a violent sea storm put in peril not only his life but also his salvation, since he had not yet been baptized. With tears and fervor he besought God to spare him, vowing to dedicate his whole self to Him, and the tempest gave way to calm. At Athens Saint Gregory was later joined by St. Basil the Great, whom he already knew; but now their acquaintanceship grew into a lifelong brotherly love. Another fellow student of theirs in Athens was the young Prince Julian, who later as Emperor was called the Apostate because he denied Christ and did all in his power to restore paganism. Even in Athens, before Julian had thrown off the mask of piety; St. Gregory saw what an unsettled mind he had, and said, "What an evil the Roman State is nourishing" (Orat. V, 24, PG 35:693).

After their studies at Athens, Gregory became Basil's fellow ascetic, living the monastic life together with him for a time in the hermitages of Pontus. His father ordained him presbyter of the Church of Nazianzus, and St. Basil consecrated him Bishop of Sasima (or Zansima), which was in the Archdiocese of Caesarea. This consecration was a source of great sorrow to Gregory, and a cause of misunderstanding between him and Basil; but his love for Basil remained unchanged, as can be plainly seen from his Funeral Oration on Saint Basil (Orat. XLIII).

About the year 379, Saint Gregory came to the assistance of the Church of Constantinople, which had already been troubled for forty years by the Arians; by his supremely wise words and many labors he freed it from the corruption of heresy, and was elected Archbishop of that city by the Second Ecumenical Council, which assembled there in 381, and condemned Macedonius, Archbishop of Constantinople, as the enemy of the Holy Spirit. When St. Gregory came to Constantinople, the Arians had taken all the churches and he was forced to serve in a house chapel dedicated to St. Anastasia the martyr. From there he began to preach his famous five sermons on the Trinity, called the Triadica. When he left Constantinople two years later, the Arians did not have one church left to them in the city. St. Meletius of Antioch (see Feb. 12th), who was presiding over the Second Ecumenical Council, died in the course of it, and St. Gregory was chosen in his stead; there he distinguished himself in his expositions of dogmatic theology.

Having governed the Church until 382, he delivered his farewell speech—the Syntacterion, in which he demonstrated the Divinity of the Son—before 150 bishops and the Emperor Theodosius the Great; in this speech he requested, and received from all, permission to retire from the see of Constantinople. He returned to Nazianzus, where he lived to the end of his life, and reposed in the Lord in 391, having lived some sixty-two years.

His extant writings, both prose and poems in every type of metre, demonstrate his lofty eloquence and his wondrous breadth of learning. In the beauty of his writings, he is considered to have surpassed the Greek writers of antiquity, and because of his God-inspired theological thought, he received the surname "Theologian." Although he is sometimes called Gregory of Nazianzus, this title belongs properly to his father; he himself is known by the Church only as Gregory the Theologian. He is especially called "Trinitarian Theologian," since in virtually every homily he refers to the Trinity and the one essence and nature of the Godhead. Hence, Alexius Anthorus dedicated the following verses to him:

Like an unwandering star beaming with splendor,  
Thou bringest us by mystic teachings, O Father,  
To the Trinity's sunlike illumination,  
O mouth breathing with fire, Gregory most mighty.

Fr. Vasile Mihai
Basil is celebrated in January on the 1st, Gregory on the 25th and Chrysostom on the 27th. The common feast we celebrate today was instituted in the 11th century, in the time of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus.

At one time there was a quarrel among the people about who was the greatest of the three. Some gave Basil the pre-eminence for his purity and courage; others Gregory for the unfathomable depth and height of his theological mind; others still Chrysostom for the wonderful beauty of his speech and the clarity of his presentation of the Faith. So the first were called Basilians, the second Gregorians and the third Johannites. But, by the providence of God, this dispute was resolved to the benefit of the Church and the yet greater glory of the three saints.

The Bishop of Euchaita, John, had a vision in his sleep, in which each of these saints appeared to him in great glory and indescribable beauty, and then all three together. They then said to him: “We are one in God, as you see, and there is no dispute among us ... neither is there among us a first or a second.”

The saints also advised Bishop John to compile a common feast for them and to set aside for them a day of common commemoration. The quarrel was settled as indicated by the wonderful vision; January 30th being set aside for the common commemoration of the three hierarchs. The Greeks regard this feast not only as a church festival but also as their greatest national and scholastic holiday.

“The Prologue from Ochrid” by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic
House Blessings 2013

The “Blessing of Homes” is an Orthodox Christian custom that is observed by many at Epiphany time, on or after January 6th. Through this custom, the Parish priest is invited into one’s home to bless it with the Holy Water (Agiasmo), and also to pray for family members, for their health, well-being, sanctification and protection of their homes. The Holy Water is water that is blessed at the Church on the Feast of Epiphany, January 6th. In many parishes the Blessing is done in one day, the priest “running” from one house to the next. At St. Paul’s parish we bless houses during the month of January, on the days and times when there are no conflicts with Services and activities written on the January 2013 Calendar.

Parishioners who wish to observe this custom are encouraged to call the Church Office to schedule a Blessing of their house. Fr. Vasile will bless houses from Monday through Saturday, starting day being January 7th afternoon and ending day being January 31st. However, when scheduling your blessing, please pay attention to the Services and activities written already on the Calendar for January. Also, out of consideration for other parishioners, you may want to adhere to the following suggestions:

- if you are retired, you may want your blessing be done in the morning or early afternoon, so working families with children may have a shot on evening hours;
- if you live in Savannah proper, you may want to schedule a blessing somewhere between Monday and Friday, leaving Saturday for those living outside of the town;
- if you know that your house is outside of the county, you may want to schedule the blessing toward the end of the day or on a Saturday.

Please make sure that you provide clear directions to your house. Through our secretary, Mary Moriarty, Fr. Vasile will confirm the blessings for the next day. When the priest arrives at your home, you may want to do the following:

1. Welcome the Priest into your home;
2. Turn off the television and stereo and gather your family together in the family room or the dining room where you have a table;
3. You can give answers to the petitions enunciated by the Priest;
4. When during the Service comes time to bless the house, each member of the family is blessed and in turn kisses the cross and then one member of the family (younger children should be included) should lead the Priest to the various rooms of the house to be blessed. The Priest offers up a concluding prayer and dismissal.

Please note that besides having your house blessed for the following year, you have the opportunity to spend some time with the priest and he will have the chance to get to know you better. However, you may have to realize that his time is measured and that other people may wait for him in their houses. Fr. Vasile always appreciates your hospitality and will partake from whatever you want to offer him, but also please be aware that because of his diabetes he may not be able to eat sweets.

If you have any questions about House Blessings please call Fr. Vasile at 236-8256, or at 660-8171. When you call the Office, please make sure that you give us the following information:

NAME:____________________________________ Home phone:_________________
ADDRESS:_________________________________Work phone or cell:_____________
CITY:___________________________ ZIP:____________
DIRECTIONS: (Please give directions even if Fr. Vasile has been to your house before.)
2012 Tri-Church Festival

HOPE/JOY caroling with some of our Parishioners
Philoptochos Christmas meeting and ornament exchange
Sunday School Christmas Program

Sunday School Christmas Party with Santa

GOYA Christmas Party
THANK YOU
To **Everyone** who helped make the Tri-Church Festival a success.

To **Elaine, Elsie and Effie Karatassos** who donated the wreaths on the church portico in memory of their parents, *Pano & Theona Karatassos.*

SYMPATHY
To the Family and Friends of **Aspasia George Simon**, who died on December 4th, 2013. May her memory be eternal!

To the Family and Friends of **Sophie Franks** who died on December 30th, 2012. May her memory be eternal!

To the Family and Friends of **Vaso Stavridis** who died on December 30th, 2012. May her memory be eternal!

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**
*General Assembly* will be held on **Sunday, January 27th** following the Divine Liturgy. *All of those in Good Standing are encouraged to attend.*

Come and support your elected Parish Council. We need active participation from **YOU**!

**VASILOPITA SUNDAY**
Sunday, **January 13th** will be **Vasilopita Sunday**. Following the cutting of the Vasilopita, in church, the Philoptochos will host the annual luncheon. **Vasilopitas will be sold during the luncheon to benefit St. Basil’s Academy. Tickets are $10.00 and on sale now!**

** STEWARDSHIP**
A new year has begun, please make an effort to finish your **2012 Stewardship Pledge**.
Also, please turn in your **2013 Pledge/Talents Forms**. Everyone’s participation is needed to be able to meet St. Paul’s financial obligations. Thank you!

**Statements for 2012 will be sent in the next few weeks for tax purposes.**

**BLESSING OF HOMES**
Those who are interested in having their house blessed during the month of January should **call the Church Office, 236-8256.**

**House Blessings will begin January 7th and end January 30th.** All those who request a House Blessing will be called in advance to confirm the day and time of the visitation. We are trying to save the Saturdays of the month for “out of Town” parishioners who can group the visits with those others living in the area. *Fr. will be in Brunswick, Saturday, Jan. 26th to do house blessings for those in the Brunswick/St. Simon areas. Fr. Vasile has allotted 121 hours this month for house blessings-so everyone who wants one should be able to schedule one during the allotted time.*

**PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE**
Dear Members of St. Paul’s,

Your Parish Council begins the 2013 year with two brand new members, Gabrielle Franklin and Frances Spirides. Congratulations to them and to re-elected members, Tommy Danos, George Polites and Pete Simon. Our first meeting is January 8th.

The January General Assembly will be after church on the 27th. Please mark your calendars and attend this important meeting. Also, remember to turn in your 2013 Stewardship pledge of time, talent and treasure.

Your questions and comments are welcomed by the Parish Council. Please do not hesitate to contact any member of the council.

Thank you for your support of St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church.
PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

The December/Ornament Exchange had a beautiful atmosphere of fellowship and record breaking attendance. Our ladies brought a variety of their favorite dishes and all the fun loving Greek Drama that the ornaments inspire! Our speaker was Kennette Yow, House Manager from the Ronald McDonald House of Savannah. We were able to give her the soda can tabs we collected. Later we took a group photo giving the checks from the Silent Auction proceeds to her and to Jamiey Espisina from Hospice of Savannah.

Things to remember:
Tray passing: January 6th & February 3rd.
Philoctochos Coffee Hours in December: Funerals of Col. George Tassey, Aspasia Simon and Sophia Franks; Memorial for Louis Vlahos, Sr.
January 13th- Vasilopita Luncheon: Menu is Lamb Shank, Greek Oven Potatoes, Green Beans, salad and dessert. The price is $10 per person. The menu will be a collection of food from some of the businesses that are dedicated to our success with the Food & Wine. We support them because they support us!! We will have spaghetti on hand for the children at no charge. Vasilopita bread will be sold and auctioned to benefit St. Basil’s Academy. Those interested in making breads, please contact Betsy Varlagas at cabvasilis@aol.com or call 398-8444.
February is National Heart Month! In keeping with tradition, all Philoptochos members are asking the Parish to wear red on Sunday, February 3rd. We are also planning a Health Fair and Blood Drive for this month as well. The date will be announced soon and we will need your help!
Monthly sign ups have expanded into 2013: Thank you members for your superb response. It is a proven fact that the more people involved, the more successful our organization is going to be. The calendar is located in the Hellenic Center Meeting Room. Please sign up! Remember Philoptochos is not about one person, it is about all of us collectively making it work!!
Membership Drive is on-please see any Board Member for more details. Come join us!! We have two Committees that need some specialized members: Health and Education. If you would like to share your expertise or are just interested in these areas, please see Betsy Varlagas.
THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU: * Mercie Polites for donating the Philoptochos News Board so that we can keep everyone aware of our events. * To all the parishioners who have embraced our good works. Your kindness has been a success for the local Second Food Harvest, Union Mission, Backos Children’s Hospital, Ronald McDonald Charities and Hospice of Savannah Aloha Grief Camp. We also are able to support Regional and National Charities that we hold dear such as St. Basil’s Academy.

Happy New Year to all!!!!
“A new Year is unfolding-like a blossom the petals curled tightly concealing the beauty within.” Author Unknown
I bet we can find that inner beauty in all of us.
~ Betsy Varlagas

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Happy New Year! A good time was had by all at our Christmas program and party. A big thank you to Mary Catherine Mousourakis for her musical guidance, Tom & Magdaline Sideris for the wonderful snacks and of course to Santa for making his annual appearance to hand out ornaments and candy canes and to hear our Christmas wish list!

I want to thank everyone who participated in our Candy Cane Tree. We were able to help out four families and the Ronald McDonald house.

Starting in January, each class will begin collecting soda can tabs for our local Ronald McDonald House. Each class will have its own drop-off box, so start saving those tabs now!!

I am hoping to do a fund raiser for the Ronald McDonald House toward the end of the Sunday School year to help out this wonderful establishment.

~ Bonnie Danos

CATERING REMINDER

The Savannah Chapter of the Quarterback Club will hold their annual dinner on Saturday, February 2nd.

Volunteers will be approached to work at this function and we ask that you mark your calendars and plan to be at the Hellenic Center by 5:45pm.

Please contact Tom Sideris for any questions or change in your plans.

Thank you!
The beautiful Poinsettias that decorated the church this Holiday season were given by:

**Helen Z. Alexov**, in memory of Peter, Nicholas, Lidia, Dleksa, Maria, Victor; for the health of my family.

**John & Betty Chokos**, for the health of our family

**Helen Christopher**, in memory of Chris Christopher and for the health of my family.

**Andy & Jae Crawford & Family**, In Memory of James Douglas and Charles Douglas

**Eleni Elling**, in memory of Eleni Saltourides, Thomas Papadopoulos & Anastios Saltourides; for the health of Ronald Elling.

**Steven & Gabriella Fischer**, in memory of George N. P. Pahno; for the health of Constantia N. Pahno, their children and grandchildren.

**Gabrielle Franklin**, in memory of Carl E. Franklin, Victor, Elain & George Abilama.

**Denis A. & Patti George**, for the health of Pat George and Nick George.

**Patricia George & Children**, in memory of Andrew George; for the health of David Andrew George.

**Nick George**, Mary George and Cynthia George Hunt

**George & Mary Ann Gonis**, in memory of our Parents: Elias & Maria Gonis and Kanakis & Helen Katogiritis, and Uncle Nick Gonis; for the health of the Gonis family

**Anna Maria Goodson**, in memory of my father, Barry Goodson, our beloved Godparents-Katina Pappas, Manolis & Helen Karatassos, Sam, Koula & Arthur Stelianos and George Merritt, brother in Christ; for the health of our family, church family, Jerry Welsh II & Bettye Morekis

**Roz Goodson**, in memory of Barry Goodson & Kostas Kallonatis; for the health of my family, Ad-die Kalloniatitis & family, Charlie Masterpolis and Rhonda Roukasik

Nada Hawkins, in memory of Charles R. Hawkins & family Dragoslavich

Elise, Elaine & Effie Karatassos, in memory of our beloved parents, Pano & Theona Karatassos

**Kostas & Stamata Karfakis & Family**, in memory of Dionisios Makrigiorgos & Polynikis Karfakis; for the health of Aspasia Makrigiorgos & Katina Karfakis

**Margie Marianos**, for the Stelianos family

**Fr. Vasile & Presbytera Danielle Mihai**, in memory of our beloved parents; for the health of Henry Nathaniel.


**Tony, Cheree & Isaac Morris**, in memory of Timothy Kjos & Katherine Morris

**Jamie Newman**, in memory of James & Mary Yimoyines & Tom Falvey; for the health of Jamie, Bill, BJ, Marydith, Tom & family.

**Nick, Gini Britney & Niko**, in memory of our grandparents, fathers, family members & Atha Palamiotis; for the health of Clarice Nichols & Joyce Leatherwood.

**Bill & Elaine Pappas**, in memory of Betty, Athena & Gregory Andris, Gus & Katie Pappas; for the health of Stavros Andris.

**John & Helen Pappas**, in memory of Ourania Blentza, Elizavet Orfanides, Panagiotis Blentzas, Elizavet Pappas & Ekaterini Orfanides; for the health of John & Helen Pappas, Paul Chapouris, Mariana & Pete Keller & family

**M/M James J. Pethis**, in memory of our parents & grandparents, for the health of the Pethis family

**Mercie & George Polites**, in memory of Constantino, John, Merope & Theodore; for the health of Calliopé, James, George, John, James, Mercie, Peter, Madeline, John Peter & Renee

**Connie & James Preston**, in memory of our parents

**Katherine Pullium**, in memory of M/M Angelo Angelou
The beautiful Poinsettias that decorated the church this Holiday season were given by:

Irene & Toby Purdy, in memory of Charles X and Mary T. Miltiades; Betty G. Purdy & all deceased family & friends; for the health of Irene and Toby Purdy, Bernie Purdy, Richard Lutz & all family & friends.

Stephanie Roach, in memory of Chris Christopher, for the health of Irene Roach & family.

Bill Rovolis, in memory of Barbara, Teddy, Ruby & Tash Rovolis; for the health of the Rovolis Family, Charlie Masterpolis & St. Paul’s Parish.

Pete Simon, in memory of Charles & Aspasia; for the health of Pete, Stella and Jimmy.

Thomas Sullivan, in memory of Tash & Ruby Rovolis, Mary, Virginia & Lula Masterpolis; for the health of Stacy, Christina, Angelique & Nolina Sullivan and Charlie Masterpolis

Rita Toffery, in memory of Bicha Bahta and Zegheie Toffery; for the health of Solomon Toffery

George Vaveris, in memory of Helen & Konstantine Vaveris & Matthew Calles; for the health of Helen Calles

The Warwick, Family & the Elling Family, in memory of Thomas Papa-dopoulos, Eleni Saltourides, Anastasios Saltourides & Micheal Lazarides

Mary Anne & Jerry Welsh, in memory of Lula Vandora Vlachos & Tash Vandora; for the health of Jerry P. Welsh II & Patrick Welsh

Isabella Webster, in memory of Leon Webster

Thanks to all who so generously donated poinsettias this year – our church was so very beautiful!!
Vasilopita Luncheon

Sponsored by Philoptochos

Sunday, January 13, 2012
Following Divine Liturgy

MENU:
Lamb shank, Roasted Greek Potatoes,
Green Beans, Salad,
Roll & Dessert

You May Purchase Tickets After Church or thru the Church Office during the week.

$10.00 per person

Vasilopitas will be sold during the luncheon.

to benefit St. Basil’s Academy.
2012 Stewardship Pledges Received

Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge forms for the 2012 pledge year. Please join them in their support for St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church and submit your pledge form today!

Ms. Helen Alexov
Mrs. Kula Afleris
Mr. Stavros Andris
Ms. Irene Andriss
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Anestos
Mr. Peter Antopolos
Mrs. Effie Antopolos
Mr. & Mrs. Tak Aragonis
M/M Angelo Avgelinos
M/M Calin Gabriel Badea
M/M Jason Bateham
Ms. Oana Bejan
Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Berry
Mrs. Mabel Birroes
Ms. Brittany Boitz-Bass
Ms. Svetlana Boyarina
M/M Mark Brown
Fr. & Pres. John Caparison
Mr. Andrew Caparison
Miss Grace Capetan
Mr. Alex Carellas
Mr. Ted Carellas
Mrs. Sonya Carellas
M/M Sasha Cejic
Mrs. Vicki Center
Mrs. Bess Chappas
Mrs. Irene Chiboucas
Mr. & Mrs. James Chirbas
Mr. & Mrs. James J. Chokos
Mr. & Mrs. John Chokos
Mr. George Christopher
Mrs. Helen S. Christopher
Mr. & Mrs. John Clark
Mr. & Mrs. George Collias
Mrs. Linda Costantino
M/M Nicholas Costalas
Mrs. Callie Cotoulas
M/M Andrew Crawford
John S. Dalis
Miss Ellen Danos
Mr. & Mrs. Dean Danos
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Danos
Ms. Christina Darden
Mrs. Cynthia Davidson
Mrs. Mary Rose Scordas Davis
Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Dawes
M/M Paul Deaver
Mr. & Mrs. Adam Deleanides
Mrs. Brooke Dicks
Mr. & Mrs. Sinisa Domazet
Eli Jack Donker
Mr. & Mrs. George Donkar
Denese Tootle Donkar

+Mrs. Angela Dotson
Miss Mary Economy
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Elfrink
Mr. & Mrs. Eric Ellingson
Mr. & Mrs. Floyd Everly
Mr. & Mrs. Johnny Farley
Ms. Barbara Farley
Mr. & Mrs. John Farmakis
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Fischer
Ms. Gabrielle Franklin
Mrs. Sophie Franks
Mr. Nick George
Mrs. Patricia George
Mr. & Mrs. Cezar Georgescu
Ms. Anna Ghionis
Ms. Phyliis Glisson
Ms. Tina Maria Glisson
Mr. & Mrs. George Gonis
Mrs. Yuliya Gonzales
Mrs. Fay Goodson
Ms. Anna Maria Goodson
Miss Anna Gounaris
Miss Tia Halatas
Ms. Amanda Hardee
Mrs. Nada Hawkins
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Hefner
M/M Eddie Holmes
Mrs. Susan Hornor
Mrs. Paula Hough
+Cynthia George Hunt
Mr. & Mrs. Emil Iacob
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Jebeles
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Johnson
Mike & Vanessa Jones
Mr. Mike Kageorge
Mrs. Irene Karakolidis
Miss Effie Karatsassos
Miss Elaine Karatsassos
Miss Elysie Karatsassos
Mr. & Mrs. Kostas Karfakis
Ms. Amy Karlewicz
Mr. Martin Kehee
Mr. & Mrs. Alexander Robert Kelly
Mrs. Kidd Kelly
Mr. & Mrs. George Khutishevili
Ms. Patrice Kiley
Mr. & Mrs. Kim Anthony Kolgaklis
Mrs. Mary Kolgaklis
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Kouloris
Ms. Helen Kouzzakas
Mr. Harry Kyriakides
Mrs. Georgia F. Lamas
Mrs. Stella Lamas

Mr. Eddie Lambros
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Lambros
Mr. & Mrs. Vasileios Leoes
Mr. Greg Lempeesis
Mr. & Mrs. Stratton Leopold
Mr. William Leschak
Mrs. Apostolia Liazis
Ms. Kay Litchfield
Mrs. Helen Loupassakis
Dr. & Mrs. Gary Luken
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Magulias
Ms. Tasia Mamais Phillips
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Mamais
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Mamalakis
Mr. Michael Mamalakis
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Mamalakis
Mrs. Anna Mamalakis
Mr. & Mrs. P.M. Manuel
Mr. Charles Masterpolis
Dr. Peter Mastopoulos
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Mastopoulos
Mrs. Helen McCracken
Mrs. Christine McDonnell
Fr. & Presbyter Vasile Mihai
Mr. & Mrs. Alex Miltiades
Mr. John Miltiades
Mr. Victor Miltiades
Mr. & Mrs. X. Dimitri Miltiades
Mrs. Ann Miltiades
Ms. Helen Miltiades
Mrs. Peppi Monas
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Moore
Miss Anne Morekis
Dr. & Mrs. Tony Morris
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Mousourakis
Mr. Charles Nerdiga
Mr. Walter Nerdiga
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Nelson
Mrs. Kitty Nettis
Mrs. Jamie Newman
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Newport
Mr. & Mrs. Nick Nichols II
Mrs. Clarice Nichols
Mrs. Maria Nichols
Dr. & Mrs. Erik Nordenhaug
M/M William Norse
Mr. Steve Pahno
Mrs. Connie Pahno
Mr. & Mrs. Deno Palamotiis
M/M Constantinos Papaconstantinou
Ms. Elaine Papa
Dr. Nicholas John Pappas
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pappas
Thank you to those St. Paul’s members who have pledged for 2012.

We encourage everyone’s participation in order for our church to fulfill it’s financial obligations and be able to fund the activities and ministries of our church.

2013 Commitment Form for Treasure, Time and Talent: Please take time and prayerfully consider what Pledge you want to offer up and also the Ministries of the church that you would like to be involved in and return the forms to the church office. Thank- You!
St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church

Stewardship Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December 2011</th>
<th>December 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As of December 31&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;, 2011</td>
<td>As of December 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Collected To Date:</td>
<td>Total Collected To Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$131,281.24</td>
<td>$127,208.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Pledged To Date:</td>
<td>Total Pledged To Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$139,986.00</td>
<td>$139,750.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Families who have turned in a pledge card</td>
<td>Total Families who have turned in a pledge card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>229</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please try to finish your 2012 Pledge as soon as possible, so that we may be able to meet the churches obligations in a timely manner. Thank you!*
January 6th

**Ushers:** Tommy Danos, Jamie Newman, George Polites, Pete Simon, Frances Spirides, Steve Mousourakis & George Donkar

**Acolytes:** Michael Mamalakis, Eugene Mihai, Alex McDonnell, Atha Stathopoulos, & Channing Stroud

**Nursery:** Open with Parental Supervision

**Bookstore:** Anna Maria Goodson

---

January 13th

**Ushers:** Jimmy Stevens, Gabrielle Franklin, Eddie Lambros, Tom Sideris, Chris Simon, Jimmy Anestos & Andy Crawford

**Acolytes:** Drew Deleanides, Timothy Newport, James Polites & Andoni Sideris

**Nursery:** Open with Parental Supervision

**Bookstore:** Connie Preston

---

January 20th

**Ushers:** Kostas Karfakis, Mary Ann Gonis, George Gonis, Tony Morris, Billy Norse & Jerry Welsh, Sr.

**Acolytes:** Michael Mamalakis, Eugene Mihai, Alex McDonnell, Atha Stathopoulos & Channing Stroud

**Nursery:** Open with Parental Supervision

**Bookstore:** Ursla Anestos

---

January 27th

**Ushers:** Tommy Danos, Jamie Newman, George Polites, Pete Simon, Frances Spirides, Steve Mousourakis & George Donkar

**Acolytes:** Drew Deleanides, Timothy Newport, James Polites & Andoni Sideris

**Nursery:** Open with Parental Supervision

**Bookstore:** Alexis Donkar

---

* denotes person opening
** denotes closing
PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE BULLETIN!

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Savannah, GA 31412-2005
Tel: (912)233-2251
Fax: (912) 233-0464
Isn’t it strange,
How a 20 dollar bill seems like such a large amount when you donate it to the church,
But such a small amount when you go shopping?

Isn’t it strange,
How 2 hours seems too long when you’re at church and how
Short they seem when you’re watching a good movie?

Isn’t it strange,
How everyone wants front-row-tickets to concerts or games,
But they do whatever is possible to sit in the last row at church?

Isn’t it strange,
How everyone wants a place in heaven,
But they neither believe nor do what is necessary to get them there?

Source: Internet
St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church
14 West Anderson Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

Address Service Requested

Oasipita
Luncheon

MENU:
Lamb Shank, Roasted Greek Potatoes,
Green Beans, Salad,
Roll & Dessert

Sponsored by Philoptochos

Sunday, January 13th, 2013

Vasilopitas will be sold during the luncheon
to benefit St. Basil’s Academy

You May Purchase Tickets ($10) after Church or in the office during the week.