

**Holy Assumption Orthodox Church**  
*Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith*

110 EAST MAIN STREET,  
Marblehead, OH 43440

V. Rev. Archpriest Peter Tomas, Rector

Rectory: (419) 798-4591

Father Peter's cell: (607) 206-5523

E-mail: [info@holyassumptionmarblehead.org](mailto:info@holyassumptionmarblehead.org)

Father Peter's email: [frpetertomas@yahoo.com](mailto:frpetertomas@yahoo.com)

website: [www.holyassumptionmarblehead.org](http://www.holyassumptionmarblehead.org)



***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,  
Diocese of the Midwest***

**JANUARY 5, 2025**

**TWENTY EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
EVE OF THEOPHANY**

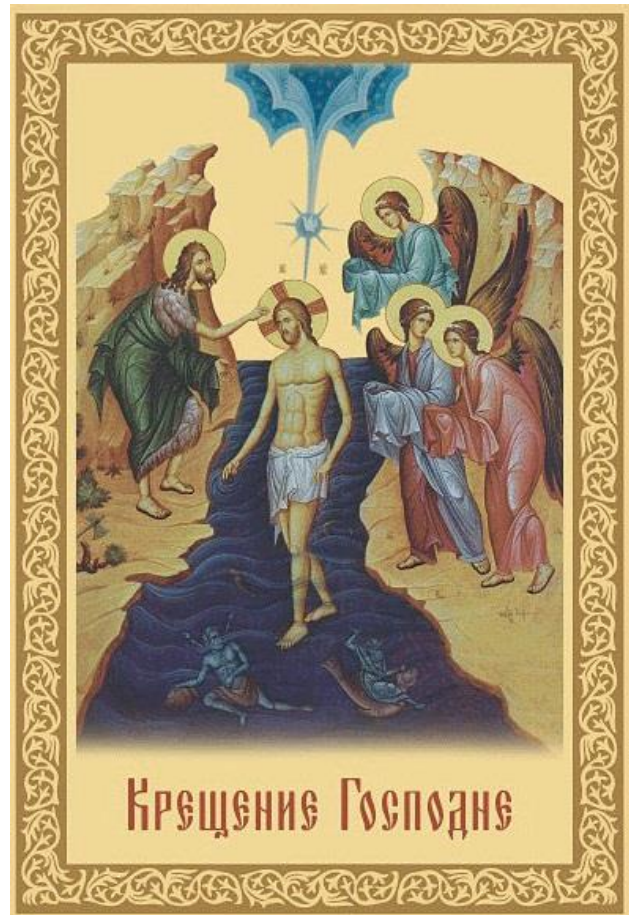
**EPISTLE: 2 Timothy 4:5-8**

Brethren: Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

**GOSPEL: Mk 1:1-8**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.'" John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in



**Theophany – Baptism of Our Lord**

the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK

**MON. Jan 6**

**Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**

2 Tim 4:5-8, Mk 1:1-8

**9:30 AM**

**DIVINE LITURGY followed by the Great Blessing of the water**

**TUE. Jan 7**

Afterfeast of the Theophany, Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; Acts 19:1-8, Jn 1:29-34

**WED. Jan 8**

Afterfeast of the Theophany, Venerable George the Chozebite, Abbot; Heb 5:11-6:8, Lk 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24

**THU. Jan 9**

Afterfeast of the Theophany, Martyr Polyeuktos; Heb 7:1-6, Lk 21:28-33

**FRI. Jan 10**

Afterfeast of the Theophany, Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa; Heb 7:18-25, Lk 21:37-22:8

**SAT. Jan 11**

Saturday after Theophany, Venerable Theodosius the Great; Eph 6:10-17, Mt 4:1-11

**4:00 PM**

**VESPERS**

**SUN. Jan 12**

**29<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, Sunday after Theophany, Tone 4**

**9:10 AM**

**HOURS**

**9:30 AM**

**DIVINE LITURGY Followed by Coffee Hour**



## FOR YOUR PRAYERS

**Patti Owens**, 311 Woodbridge Road, Vermilion, OH 44089; **Basil Glovinsky**, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; **Subdeacon Roger Pinta**, P.O. Box 39, Middle Bass, OH 43446; **Ed & Irene Vangeloff**, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870



## JANUARY REPOSED

Andrew Matway (1906) No date provided; William Gratson (1908) No date provided; Eva Hritsko (1908) No date provided; Sara Rose (2005) No date provided; **3-** Mat. Marilyn Federoff (2019); **3-** Larry Naiser (2019); **3-** Elinor Williams (2021); **4-** Margaret Reavley (1965); **4-** Baby Clyde Madison (2020); **5-** Russell (2019) Heidi's relative; **5-** Donald (2019) Waynes Relative; **5-** Maria Semionow (1981); **11-** Anna Tomko (1960); **15-** Archpriest Pavel Soucek (2009) Former Pastor; **21-** Daniel Kowal (2006); **21-** Philip Kobb (2018); **23-** Helen Beadle (1988); **23-** Deborah Pribanic (2020); **25-** Jane (2019) Ron's Aunt; **25-** William "Bill" Alber (2021); **28-** Michael Tarasavage (2021); **29-** Anna Kravetz (1973); **29-** Marjorie Kowal (2003); **29-** Ernest Gresh (2020); **29-** Rick Schlotterer (2020); **30-** Anna Schofield (2021)



## PRAYER LIST

**Parishioners & Family:** Norb / Greg Twarek / Heidi Golob / Ron & Bobbie Royhab / Rodney Clevenger / Jennifer Heffernan / Tom Hileman / Pam / Jim Twarek / Ed Garrity / Patti Owens / Barbara Wroblewski / Michal Tomáš / Helena Tomášova / Ruth Sheller / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Subdeacon Roger Pinta / Ed Vangeloff / Irene Vangeloff / Sonja Rose / Ron Royhab / James Bargdill / John Beadle / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Elaine Hileman / Betty Kovach / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Clifford / Gleice, Sophie & Chloe / Carol / Nora.

**Other Requests:** Catechumen Blake Shoemaker / Catechumen Nickolas Dawenport / Matushka Melania / Sharyn Osborne / Christine Zahm / Amy / Bill Byrnes / Michael Heffernan / Susanne / Barbara Heffernan / Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Sidharth Bijilani – friend of Subdeacon Roger and Debbie Pinta / Anthony / Archpriest Ján Čížmár / Archpriest David Lis / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Robert Piznar / Mark Masica / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chris.

**Military:** Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



### VIGILS FOR DECEMBER 29

**Susan Guzy 1** Special Intentions

**Fr. David Hannes 1** Remembering Sophie Monak and Ruthe Flewelling

**Laura Kovach 3** For health and/or healing of Matushka Melania, Ron R., Betty K., Margaret M., David M., Hannah S., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Kathie J., Jerry P., Ed & Irene V, Heidi & Wayne G., Greg T., and Sarah K.

Birthday blessings to Jim and anniversary blessings to Christi & Fred

Safe travels to family & friends

**Sandy Martin 1** Special Intentions

**Darlene Mazurik 1** Prayers for thanksgiving, health, and guidance

**Natalie Twarek 8** Birthday blessing to Fr John (12/26), Safe travel for Laura and Jim, For health and recovery of Greg and Andy, For the health Fr Peter & Matushka Michelle, For the health & recovery of Matushka Melania, For the health and recovery on Ron, Rodney, Betty, Carol, Kayla, Bill, Ruth, Pam, Jim, Jerry, Heidi, Father Emilian, Barbara Heffernan, Health and healing for Father's parents Michal & Helena and Matushka's mom Barbara, and Walter, For the health of Jen, Tony, Bev, Ed, Irene, Father David, Judy, Tina, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Tina's dad, Earl, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat



### JANUARY CANDLE SPONSORS

**Altar Candles:** Fr. Peter and Mat. Michelle, For Health and God's Blessings for Barbara Wroblewski, and Michal & Helena Tomáš (**\$50**); **Chandelier:** The Vangeloff family, For the health and healing of Dad, Ed (**\$50**); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Available (**\$25**); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, Birthday blessings to Jim and Sarah (**\$20**); **Candles at St. Tikhon Icon:** For Safety and Health of Nicholas, Tikhon, Gleice, Sophie & Chloe (**\$20**)







## READERS LIST

Sunday Jan 5 – Jake  
Sunday Jan 12 – Tim  
Sunday Jan 19 – Jake  
Sunday Jan 26 – Joe

## ATTENDANCE



**12/29** Divine Liturgy, **22** attending (10 guests); **12/31** Vespers, **5** attending; **01/01** Divine Liturgy **12** attending (7 guests)



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

**7** – Susan Guzy; **8** – Matushka Melania Adamcio \*; **13** – Mary Blackford; **13** – Roger & Debby Pinta Anniversary; **16** – Matushka Michelle Tomas; **17** – Kayla Fay

## UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- Jan 6<sup>th</sup>** THEOPHANY -BAPTISM OF OUR LORD – Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM (*Monday*)
- Jan 26<sup>th</sup>** Potluck followed by Annual Parish Meeting (*Sunday*)
- Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>** MEETING OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE (*Sunday*)
- Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>** Memorial Saturday (*Saturday*)
- Mar 3<sup>rd</sup>** Beginning of the Great Fast (*Monday*)
- Apr 13<sup>th</sup>** Palm Sunday (*Sunday*)
- Apr 20<sup>th</sup>** HOLY PASCHA (*Sunday*)



## SUNDAY OFFERING



### Sunday, December 29, 2024

Tithe	\$ 345.00
Donations	\$ 117.00
Candles	\$ 19.00
Vigils	\$ 45.00
Holy Day Donation	\$ 100.00
Building Restoration	<u>\$1,500.00</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$2,126.00</b>

*May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!*



## CHARITY OF THE MONTH

“Support a Priest (OCMC);” is the charity we donate to for the month of January.



## CLEANING SCHEDULE

Jan 6, Basil & Tim  
Jan 13, Susan  
Jan 27, Stephanie  
Feb 3, Sandy



## COFFEE HOUR SPONSOR LIST

Jan 5 – Holy Supper  
Jan 12– Greg

Please sign up to host coffee hour. Signup sheet is located in the Social Hall



## OUR SYMPATHIES – MEMORY ETERNAL!

Our prayers and deepest sympathies are extended to **Debby and Roger Pinta** on passing of Debby's mother † **KATHERINE DAUTERMAN** into Life Eternal on **Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup>**, and to **Jeane and Tom Hileman** on passing of Tom's mother † **ELAINE HILEMAN**, who fell asleep in the Lord also on **Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup>**. *"In blessed repose grant eternal rest, O Lord, to your ever-remembered servants † KATHERINE and † ELAINE, and make their Memory Eternal! Vichnayja Yim Pamyat!"*



## THEOPHANY – THE ANNUAL BLESSING OF HOMES

Between the Feast of Theophany and the beginning of the Great Fast (Lent), it is customary in our Holy Church to have our homes blessed by the parish priest with the Holy Water sanctified on this glorious Feast Day. This is an ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church and through it we extend the "Blessing of Jordan" into our homes and private places.

This Blessing of our homes underscores and enhances the connection between our parish life and our "Home Church." It also gives us and our children an opportunity to see our priest in a more personal setting. All of this strengthens our relationship with God and His Holy Church.

### Why do we bless houses year after year?

Christ, by entering the Jordan, sanctified it, and with it all creation. Material creation once again became "very good" as it was in the beginning. The central sign of God's sanctification of all things through the feast of Theophany is the act of blessing the homes of faithful Christians.

The priest visits members of the Church to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with Holy Water. He asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. Thus, the house itself, together with the living persons of the family, is "filled with all the fullness of God."

**Please Note:** Parishioners who wish to have their house blessed are asked to fill out the form, which can be found in the vestibule. Each household that requests this blessing will be contacted by phone to schedule the mutual convenient time.



## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish Meeting of our parish will be held on **Sunday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**, following the Divine Liturgy. All voting members in good standing are encouraged not only to attend this vitally important meeting, but also to constructively participate. Please mark this on your calendars, and prepare for the meeting by prayer, fasting, and receiving Holy Confession and Holy Communion. This is the first announcement.

### ***To Be a Voting Member in Good Standing***

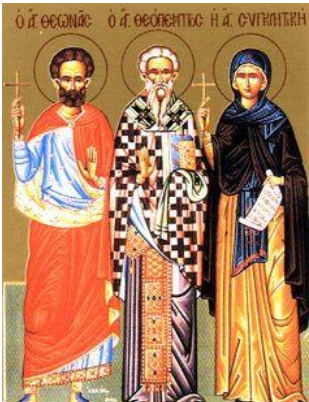
The Parish Bylaws of the Diocese of the Midwest, Orthodox Church in America, defines a "voting member in good standing:"

- a) is a Baptized and Chrismated Orthodox Christian;
- b) is at least 18 years of age;
- c) partakes of the Sacraments of Private Confession and Communion in one's home parish at least once a year;
- d) has been a member of the Parish for a prior consecutive six (6) month period; and
- e) regularly fulfills such financial obligation as established by the All-American Councils, Diocesan Assemblies, and the Parish, which obligations may be adjusted or waived by the Rector in consultation with the Parish Council. (*Article II, Section 2*)

If there is any question regarding your status as a "voting member in good standing," please contact Natalie Twarek and Fr. Peter at your earliest convenience.

We kindly ask that the following reports be prepared and submitted to Fr. Peter about two weeks before the meeting so they can be copied and distributed:

- President's Report (Natalie)
- All Financial Reports including Fundraising (Joe)
- Cemetery and Envelopes Reports (Natalie)
- Baking Report (Tina)



## **Hieromartyr Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia, and Martyr Theonas**

Commemorated on January 5

The Holy Martyrs Theopemptus and Theonas suffered in Nicomedia in the year 303. Saint Theopemptus was bishop in Nicomedia in the time of Diocletian. Speaking out against idolatry, he defended the faith in Christ. Because of this, he became one of the first victims of the Diocletian persecution.

The saint refused to obey the emperor's order to worship an idol of Apollo. Saint Theopemptus was thrown into a red-hot furnace, but by the power of God he remained alive. The emperor came to the furnace by night with a detachment of soldiers, and there he saw the saint alive and praying to God. Ascribing the miracle to magic, Diocletian thought to exhaust Saint Theopemptus by depriving him of food and drink for twenty-two days, but the martyr was preserved by the will of God.

The emperor brought the famous sorcerer Theonas to overcome Bishop Theopemptus' supposed magical power. Theonas prepared a poison for Saint Theopemptus, put it into a little cake, and offered it to him to eat. The poison did no harm at all to Saint Theopemptus. Then Theonas tried an even stronger poison on the martyr. Seeing that Saint Theopemptus remained unharmed, he came to believe



in Christ. They threw him into prison together with the holy bishop, who taught and baptized him, giving him the name Synesios (which means “full of understanding”).

At dawn Diocletian summoned Saint Theopemptus, and again tried to turn him to pagan impiety. Seeing that the bishop remained firm in his faith, he subjected him to many grievous tortures, after which the saint was beheaded. The holy martyr Theonas refused to offer sacrifice to idols, so he was buried alive in a deep ditch. This occurred at Nicomedia in the year 303.



*Because You Asked*

### Mary as Ever-Virgin

Up until recent centuries, the early church’s teaching that Mary remained a virgin for her entire life was unchallenged. The teaching of the early church rests firmly on the accounts

given in scripture.

A modern objection relies on a verse found in the Gospel of Matthew,

Matthew 1:24-25

*“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”*

This modern interpretation understands the word “until” to imply that after Mary had given birth to Jesus, Joseph had sexual relations with Mary. Though it is a valid interpretation of the word, “until” does not always refer to a time before, then after. Sometimes it refers to a time both before and after. For example,

*And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20).  
Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children until the day of her death. (2 Sam 6:23)  
The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” (Mark 12:36)*

*Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and from until the waters had dried up from the earth. (Genesis 8:7)*

No bible commentator would say that after the end of the age Christ is no longer with us. Or that Michal had children after the day she died. Or that Christ will no longer sit next to the Father once His enemies had been defeated. From the rest of the scriptures in Genesis we know that the raven never came back. The early church held that Joseph never had sexual relations with Mary.

In the Jewish culture the act of becoming married was a twostep process. First was the betrothal, then the actual wedding. There are no verses in Scripture that actually state that Mary and Joseph married. All the verses use the term betrothed. If they never went past the steps of betrothal, they would have never engaged in sexual intercourse. In light of Scripture, it is reasonable that Mary was Joseph’s betrothed, but not fully his wife.

Another modern objection comes from the Gospel of Mark,

Mark 6:3

*“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

The scripture is clear that Jesus is the son of Mary, but is not clear if the other siblings are also Mary’s children.

Up until recent centuries, the early church's teaching that Mary remained a virgin for her entire life was unchallenged. The Orthodox hold firm to the teachings passed on to them from the Apostles, in accord with the Scriptures, that Mary was a virgin both before and after the birth of Christ.

In Jewish culture, when a couple had children from a previous marriage, the children from the male's previous marriage would be referred to as sons or daughters from the man's name. The children from the current marriage would be referred to as sons or daughters from the woman's name. In this scripture, when Jesus is called the "son of Mary", it would be reasonable based on the culture of the time, to imply that the other siblings were the sons and daughters of Joseph and not Mary.

Also, the Hebrew and Greek terms for "brother" are often used to refer to relatives and not what we would understand as "brothers." For example, Abraham and Lot are called brothers in Gen 14:14 though we would understand their relationship as uncle/nephew. Jacob and Laban are also called brothers in Gen. 29:15, though we would also call this an uncle/nephew relationship. Biblical language does not always use the term brother in the same sense we do today.

In support of Mary only giving birth to Christ can be found in the Gospel of John,

*John 19:26*

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"*

If Jesus had other brothers, this would be a very strange situation as it would go against Jewish custom. According to custom if the oldest son died it would fall on the next oldest to take care of the mother. If the son, is the only son, it is his responsibility to appoint someone else to care for the mother. Jesus, being the only son of Mary does exactly that when he delegates John to take care of His mother.

The scriptures also prophesy of Mary's ever-virginity when describing the Temple,

*Ezekiel 44:1-2*

*"The gate will be shut and it will not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore, it shall be shut."*

The early church saw in this prophecy Mary as the Temple, Christ as the Prince of Peace, and the gate as Mary's womb through which Christ entered into the world. This interpretation fits the Old Testament customs of dealing with the sacred. If something had been designated as sacred, it was forbidden to it to be used for ordinary purposes. If Joseph was to have sexual relations with Mary after giving birth to God, it would have been an utterly sacrilegious act, showing no understanding for the holiness of God.

The early church continued to call Mary, "virgin", even after the time when she supposedly would have had more children. It would be very awkward to keep call her virgin and see her children next to her. The Orthodox hold firm to the teachings passed on to them from the Apostles, in accord with the Scriptures, that Mary was a virgin both before and after the birth of Christ.

*Quotes from the Early Christians*

*"The Book [the Protoevangelium] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the firstfruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the firstfruit of virginity" - Origen (Commentary on Matthew 2:17 [A.D. 248])*

*"If they [the brethren of the Lord] had been Mary's sons and not those taken from Joseph's former marriage, she would never have been given over in the moment of the passion [crucifixion] to the*



*apostle John as his mother, the Lord saying to each, 'Woman, behold your son,' and to John, 'Behold your mother' [John 19:26-27], as he bequeathed filial love to a disciple as a consolation to the one desolate" - Hilary of Poitiers (Commentary on Matthew 1:4 [A.D. 354]).*

*"Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence deny also that he took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary" - Athanasius (Discourses Against the Arians 2:70 [A.D. 360]).*



## **Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**

Commemorated on January 6

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights,

since God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast. There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but "to bury human sin by water," to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "the nature of water" and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.





## How Many Years Have Passed Since the Nativity of Christ?

by Deacon Igor Tsukanov

The modern calendar, used almost universally, begins with the Nativity of Christ. But was Christ truly born two thousand years ago, as this system suggests? Or is this date merely a convention?

The answer is both straightforward and perhaps surprising: while the date of the Nativity is not conventional, the commonly accepted year of Christ's birth is not entirely accurate. In fact,

historical evidence suggests that Christ was born approximately 5 or 6 years earlier than the year traditionally marked as His birth.

This conclusion rests on two significant historical facts:

### 1. **The death of King Herod the Great.**

According to the Gospel of Matthew, Christ was born during the reign of Herod, who sought to destroy Him by ordering the massacre of all male infants in Bethlehem and its vicinity, two years old and under (Matthew 2:16). Most historians, drawing on sources such as the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius, place Herod's death in 4 B.C. (or 750 years from the foundation of Rome). This suggests that Christ's birth must have occurred shortly before this date.

### 2. **The Gospel account of Christ's age at the start of His ministry.**

The Gospel of Luke provides another key detail: Jesus began His ministry after John the Baptist, who commenced preaching in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1). Tiberius began his rule in A.D. 13, initially as co-emperor with Augustus, before assuming sole authority in A.D. 14. This places John's ministry around A.D. 28-29, and Christ's shortly thereafter. Luke also notes that Jesus was "about thirty years old" at the time (Luke 3:23).

Combining these accounts, we see that Christ's birth must have occurred in 5 or 6 B.C., a year or two before Herod's death. This timeline reconciles the Gospel narratives of Matthew and Luke and aligns with historical records.

Could Herod have ordered the massacre of the infants in Bethlehem long before his death? Theoretically, this is possible, but it does not align with Luke's account, which places Christ's ministry in a clearly defined historical framework. Thus, the most plausible conclusion is that Christ was born in the final years of Herod's reign, fulfilling the prophetic and historical context of the Gospel accounts.

Could Christ Have Been Born in 7 B.C.?

Some have suggested that the Savior could have been born in 7 B.C., a year marked by a notable astronomical event—the rare conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, known as a "parade of planets." This phenomenon was first proposed in the 17th century by the renowned mathematician and astronomer Johannes Kepler as the possible Star of Bethlehem. Kepler theorized that this extraordinary celestial event might have guided the Magi from the East to Jerusalem and, ultimately, to Bethlehem, where they found the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child.

However, this view has been widely criticized. Such a planetary conjunction, though impressive, would not have provided the consistent and precise guidance required to lead the Magi over many months. Moreover, it could not account for the phenomenon described in the Gospel, where the star moved and even appeared to stop over the place where the Child lay. St. John Chrysostom offered an alternative

explanation, suggesting that the Star of Bethlehem was not a celestial object but rather a rational, angelic force acting under divine guidance.

### Does This Mean We Are Using an Incorrect Calendar?

It is fair to say that the calendar we use today contains inaccuracies. The error originates from the calculations of Dionysius Exiguus, a 6th-century abbot tasked with compiling a table to determine the dates of Christian Easter for the next 95 years. Dionysius also introduced the concept of numbering years from the Nativity of Christ, rather than from the foundation of Rome or the reign of Emperor Diocletian, known for his severe persecution of Christians.

Dionysius based his calculations on Luke's Gospel, which states that Jesus was "about thirty years old" in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign. He also relied on the established dates for the Nativity (25 December) and Easter (the first Sunday after the spring full moon) as recognized by the Church. From these, he concluded that Christ was born in the year 754 from the founding of Rome. However, his calculations were slightly off. By the time the error was discovered, the system had already gained widespread acceptance, making corrections impractical.

Correcting this calendar now would cause significant confusion. Historical dates, such as the year of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, would shift—1812 would become 1817, for instance—creating a ripple effect of disruption. Furthermore, since the precise year of Christ's birth remains unknown, there is little justification for introducing such disorder.

### Does an Inaccurate Date Undermine the Gospel?

The inexact date of Christ's birth does not diminish the truth of the Gospel. Unlike mythical tales of gods like Osiris or Zeus, the events of the Nativity are closely tied with the historical and cultural realities of the era. The Gospel writers did not focus on establishing an exact timeline but on bearing witness to Christ's life, teachings, Passion, and Resurrection.

"It is not dates, figures, or chronology that we believe in—these are human calculations, our earthly attempts to impose order," explains Priest Valery Dukhanin. "We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The spiritual essence of the Gospel is what truly matters. The evangelists aimed to convey their direct encounter with Christ—how He lived, what He taught, how He suffered for our sins, and how He rose again. This testimony, preserved in the Gospel, is paramount. While people often seek rational and precise information, such efforts inevitably involve some inaccuracies."

Indeed, even the birthdates of many saints remain uncertain, as they often came from humble and little-documented backgrounds. For example, debates continue over the birth year of Blessed Matrona of Moscow, despite her relatively recent life and the availability of numerous testimonies.

Ultimately, a five-to-seven-year fluctuation in the date of Christ's birth does not alter the spiritual essence of the Gospel. The Gospel is not about exact dates or numbers but about salvation, the path to overcoming sin, and becoming children of God. When one has faith in Christ and experiences the freedom and joy that the Gospel brings, questions of chronology become secondary.

Adjusting dates does not undermine faith but reflects humanity's natural curiosity and desire for precision.