

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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Department of
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ORTHODOX CHURCH in AMERICA

God Invites Us to Grow

On January 10, four days after the Feast of Theophany on which we remember the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan, the Church celebrates the memory of Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

Gregory was born into an extraordinary family; history is not sure of his exact birthdate. His maternal grandmother Macrina is a saint of the Church. Her husband was, in Gregory's words, "killed by imperial wrath"—the deadly wrath of the pagan emperor Maximinus. Therefore Gregory believed that his grandfather could rightly be called a martyr for the faith. As for Gregory's own generation, four of his siblings, in a family of nine children, are saints as he is.

But most biographers don't describe Gregory as a singularly devout child. An experience he had when he was almost twenty seems to have been a decisive one. Some relics of the saints known as the Forty Martyrs of Sebastea were brought to a chapel near the family home, and Gregory's contemplation of these relics led him to understand that it is possible to give one's whole life to God. He took his own spiritual life more seriously then, and began on his personal path of serving God with all he had.

Gregory was emotionally close to his siblings. He had been through difficulties with his older brother Basil, who all but forced him to become a bishop. It was a position to which he was ill-suited and which he was not able to handle well, even being falsely accused of mishandling funds. Nevertheless, when Basil died in 378 at just forty, Gregory was devastated. He put his grief into a huge but important task—finishing Basil's great work "The Six Days of Creation" (Hexaemeron), which Basil had not yet completed at the time of his death.



January 5, 2014

**28th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday Before the Theophany of Christ
EVE OF THE THEOPHANY**

- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 2 Tim. 4:5-8
Gospel: Mk. 1:1-8
- **Fellowship** – everyone is invited for Coffee Hour following the Divine Liturgy
- **6:00pm** – Vigil & Blessing of Waters

Schedule of Services

MONDAY, JAN. 6 - THEOPHANY OF THE LORD
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11
4:00pm - Great Vespers, followed by General Confession

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, but we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Among them are:

Michael, Mary and Max Bakaletz, Genevive Bobenko, Pauline Bodnar, Nancy Filak, Dorothy Gentner, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazorczyk, Emil Mikulik, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadine Sojka, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

The next year brought another terrible blow, when Gregory's beloved older sister Macrina died. She had been his mentor and teacher, as he freely acknowledged. He wrote a beautiful tribute to her that describes the ways in which her noble character affected him, and also tells us a great deal about the life of the Church at that time.

Gregory continued to write, developing his conviction that God has created us to grow constantly closer to Him. One of his best-known works is based on 2 Corinthians 3: 18, in which Saint Paul writes that we are being transformed "from glory to glory".

Gregory relates this growth to baptism, which he calls "regeneration". He writes that in baptism "we shall not, according to the Jew Nicodemus and his somewhat dull intelligence, change the old man into a child, nor shall we form anew him who is wrinkled and gray-headed to tenderness and youth...but we do bring back, by royal grace, him who bears the scars of sin, and has grown old in evil habits, to the innocence of the babe."

This "royal grace" makes baptism a way for us to grow—to become as innocent as babes, which means being completely dependent on God. In so doing we become stronger than giants.

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Joyce Cifaldi**, who celebrates her birthday this Monday, **Bob Czech** - this Wednesday, and **Helen Rahnefeld** - this Saturday. May God grant you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!



Announcements

◆ House blessings will be on January 6, 7, 8, and 9. The priest brings all the items needed for the blessing. However, the family can supply a bowl, candles and the family Theophany Icon. The family should also provide the priest with a list of all family members, living and deceased, so their names can be commemorated during the service.

◆ Few announcements: The next Board of Trustees' meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 21 at 7:00 p.m. Our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 16 following Divine Liturgy. A light luncheon will be available. Please plan to attend. A gentle reminder: All dues for the year ending 2013 should be paid before January 1, 2014; however, it is still not too late to do it.

◆ A sincere thank you to all of our parishioners who donated to our annual Thanksgiving food drive coordinated by Helen Baron. Your contributions were delivered to thankful and grateful recipients who otherwise would not have had those items available. Also a sincere thank you to all who donated to our seminarian St. Nicholas gift program sponsored by the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America. Your generosity was gratefully appreciated. A thank you also to all our parishioners who frequently donate food and money for our food pantry throughout the year. The need is always there and we are thankful for your thoughtfulness and kindness always.