



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
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January 2020 Bulletin



Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

As we begin this civil New Year, may we celebrate this Sunday's Great Feast, and all its miracles and blessings, as faithful Orthodox Christians: prepared to follow our Incarnate Lord and Savior on the true path of submission to God with humble and contrite hearts—both this year, and all the days of our lives. Καλή Χρονία!
+ALEXIOS Metropolitan of Atlanta

From Father Dean

Epiphany and Blessing of Homes

Each year on January 6th, our Holy Orthodox Christian Church celebrates Epiphany (Theophany) commemorating the Baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. As St. John the Baptist was baptizing Jesus, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove appeared and at the same time, a voice from heaven, the voice of God the Father was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." The Holy Trinity was revealed! God the Father was speaking, God the Son was being baptized, and God the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove. God manifested Himself as the One True God in Three persons, a belief we profess not only when we say the Nicene Creed, but also over and over during the services of our Church. Following the Divine Liturgy of January 6th, a special service of the Blessing of the Water takes place. At the conclusion of the service the faithful come forth to be blessed by the priest with the Holy Water and also drink some of the blessed water.

The day before Epiphany, January 5th, we celebrate the Forefeast of Epiphany. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy a special service of the Blessing of the Water takes place. It is similar to the service of January 6th. At the conclusion of the service, the faithful come forward to be blessed by the priest and also to drink some of the blessed water.

Epiphany is also referred to as the "Feast of Lights" because it marks the moment when the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, revealed Himself to mankind and began the work of dispelling the darkness of sin and death. You may remember from scripture that St. John the Baptist called Jesus "the true light which enlightens every man that comes into the world." "I am the Light" said Jesus. He did not say, "I will show you the light", but "I am the Light."

On this Holy Day, we should reflect on the day we were baptized, when our parents brought us to the church to be spiritually born into the family of God. We should think of the commitments our Godparents made that day on our behalf and as we grew up, made those same commitments our own. The commitment to believe in Christ and to serve Him. The commitment to renounce Satan and all sin. As we begin a New Year commit your whole life to Christ our God.

Our Holy Orthodox Christian Church has a beautiful tradition of having the priest come to bless our home with the Holy Water of Epiphany thereby bringing Christ and His blessings into our home for the New Year. Homes East of the church will be blessed on January 12th. Homes West of the church will be blessed on January 19th. To have your home blessed, give your name, address and phone number to one of the Parish Council members. Prepare your home to be blessed by placing a bowl of water, an icon and a candle on a table. Fr. Dean will offer special prayers for your family and bless all the rooms of your home with the Holy Water of Epiphany.

Schedule of Services

Sunday Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am on Jan 5 with Fr Dean

Sunday Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am on Jan 12 with Fr Dean

Sunday Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am on Jan 19 with Fr Dean

Sunday Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am on Jan 26 with Fr Dean

Visitors

A warm welcome to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church.

We are glad to have you worship with us today.

Please join us for Fellowship Hour in our Social Hall after Liturgy

2019 – A Year of Faith by George Yurchak . . . Holy Trinity still stands in faith as a beacon of Orthodoxy for the Mississippi Gulf Coast. As we look back over the past year, we have much to be thankful for. It was a year of challenge and joy. Fr Dean Gigicos and Fr Paul Mayernick continued serving Divine Liturgy and Holy Week Services throughout 2019. In addition Fr Ernesto Obregon and Fr Paul Costopoulos also helped serve Divine Liturgy during 2019.

As our parish moves forward we are no longer strictly Greek. We continue to welcome new members from a wide range of geographic and ethnic backgrounds, including a growing number of new converts to Orthodoxy. Today is God's time for us . . . and this is God's place for us. Holy Trinity will live on!

Your Parish Council and Ladies of the Agape worked hard, but you worked harder to make it happen.

CoCo Collins and Angelos Vamvakas were honored with the Archangel Michael Award from His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios at a Metropolis of Atlanta dinner and reception.

We had the most successful International Christmas Festival & Pastry Sale where the festival attendees kept coming and coming and we completely sold out of all our foods and most of our pastries. Our International Christmas Festival is dedicated to the spirituality, culture, art, music and food of the different ethnic cultures that make up Holy Trinity: Greek, Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Belarusian, Kazakhstani, Georgian, Moldovan, Uzbekistani, those with Hungarian and German backgrounds as well as the many converts to Orthodoxy. The Festival included dancing by the Georgian Dance Ensemble who came down from New York City, the Greek Kefi Dancers who came over from Birmingham Alabama and our own Gulf Coast Hellenic Dancers and Ukrainian Dancers plus the traditional foods of those ethnic groups. Our entertainment showcased the different cultures: Georgian Dance Ensemble, the Victory Belles from the National World War II Museum, our own Karen Henderson singing God Bless America, Eyler Coates and Steve Collins playing harp and bagpipes, and finally, Greek musicians Nick Trivelas and Megan Jensen. We also had a beautiful young Ukrainian singer, Polina, making her first appearance at our Christmas Festival and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

We continued with the Slavic tradition of Blessing Easter Baskets and had a wonderful Holy Week with the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and a very well attended Agape Feast. We honored Holy Trinity's veterans who give and gave so much through service to our country.

Our members also participated in Orthodox Retreats at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New Orleans and Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile. We celebrated International Women's Day and International Men's Day at Holy Trinity with a special luncheon and gifts. Helena Docherty and Michael Young were confirmed into the Orthodox Faith.

Holy Trinity again participated in the Gulf Coast Historical Society's Cultural Exposition and the Armed Forces Retirement Home Cultural Day. Also, as a result of Holy Trinity's International Christmas Festival we participated in coast libraries Children Summer Reading Program for Ethiopian and Russian. Also, Holy Trinity helped with the "Christmas and Mother's Day Concerts at Mary O'Keefe Cultural Center put on by Nataliya Petrovska-Molsbee which also featured some of our parishioners. Holy Trinity supported the International Seamen Center "Christmas on a Ship Program" with Russian/Ukrainian seamen when their ship came into Gulfport Harbor. Our parishioners gave them gift bags, said the Lord's Prayer in Russian, sang Christmas carols in Russian and enjoyed each other's fellowship.

We continued to be involved in a number of charities. We were involved with Focus North America in the school backpack program where we provided 24 backpacks filled with school supplies, to the Biloxi School System for disadvantaged school children. We continued with Feeding the Hungry by giving monetary, food donations and "Bags of Love" to those in need. We donated new hand bags filled with toiletries and other items to the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence. We stay involved with the Kids-Make-A-Wish Program, whose kids have terminal illnesses and want a special wish fulfilled. Some of these kids even helped work at our International Christmas Festival. We also donated four Christmas Trees to four families with kids making their wish come true. Holy Trinity was honored by the Mississippi Kids-Make-A-Wish Charity at a breakfast at IP Casino Resort Spa. We contributed to "Give Kids The World" charity which provides vacations to Disney World to terminally ill children and their families. We contributed to the Diakonia Retreat Center as part of the Guardian Angel Program. Holy Trinity honored Married Couples on World Marriage Day.

When Hurricanes devastated the east coast we answered the call for Hurricane Relief and took collections to support our sister churches and families in need. Holy Trinity supported her sister parishes by attending the Mobile GreekFest and the New Orleans Greek Festival. Some of our parishioners also attended and supported other Festivals in Potomac Maryland (Romanian and Serbian), Belle Chasse Louisiana (Croatian Festival) and Greek Night in Gulf Shores. Some also attended the Yarmaka Festival in Mobile where Sheila and George Yurchak were invited to do their Ukrainian and German dances. We continue to increase our library with additional donations of books, CDs DVDs and pamphlets.

Two of our parishioners became a U.S. citizen this past year: Elena Shilova and Maria Vamvakas. Inessa Kalinovskaya-Ramsey received her Physician Assistant Degree. Dr George Loukatos opened his new clinic, Alpha Urgent Care Clinic in Biloxi.

The Gulfport Galleria of Fine Arts hosted an Art Exhibit by over 24 Holy Trinity artists and they asked us to extend it for an extra month. The exhibit was entitled "Gifts from God." The inspirational artwork included a diverse mix of paintings, prints, drawings, needlework, jewelry, ceramics, pottery, wood carvings and crafts.

ChoRuss Vocal Ensemble from St Petersburg Russia was hosted and performed at Holy Trinity with songs sung at Orthodox church services and Russian folk songs. This was their first ever appearance in Mississippi and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Now we look forward to 2020 and building upon our accomplishments with a sense of anticipation, contemplation of what may come, setting of goals, and prayer for health and happiness in the community. May we share in the joy of this season of light and life, expecting the great and abundant blessings of God in the coming year. Let us offer our worship and prayers, as we serve one another and all of the people, in the grace and power of Jesus Christ Our Lord. To start the year we are blessed to celebrate two beautiful and holy feasts of the Church – the Feasts of St Basil and Theophany.

Feast of St Basil - January 1st . . . Saint Basil was born into a wealthy Christian family in Caesarea Cappadocia, Asia Minor, in 330 AD. He was one of six children, all of whom became saints. He visited monastic centers and he himself founded a monastic community where he lived with other monks for about five years. He wrote many rules and guidelines for monastics so that all Eastern monasticism owes something to his spirit. He greatly cared for the poor and suffering and built an estate which included houses for travelers, a church, a hospital and a hospice all with a complete staff. A famine struck the area and sent many poor and starving into his care; their pain grieved him and he labored to feed them with his own hands. He wrote, "If you are reduced to your last loaf of bread and a beggar appears at your door then take the loaf and lift your hands to heaven and say, O Lord, I have but this one loaf. Hunger lies in wait for me but I revere Your commandments more than all other things". If you should say this, then the bread you gave in your poverty will be changed for an abundant harvest. Basil was aware of his own shortcomings and dispirited by disappointments in his life of struggles, wrote: "For my sins, I seem to fall in everything". Nevertheless, he was far from a failure. His labors, including his writings On the Holy Spirit greatly contributed to the final triumph of Nicene orthodoxy at the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. He had a great effect on the formulation of monasticism, the Liturgy of Saint Basil is largely his own work, celebrated ten times during the liturgical year and author of the Anaphora (the central portion of the Divine Liturgy). We also celebrate St Basil with St Gregory the Great and St John Chrysostom on the Feast of the Three Great Hierarchs on January 30th.

Feast of Theophany - January 6th . . . Make ready, O Zebulon and prepare thyself, Nephthali. River Jordan, stop flowing and leap for joy at the Lord's coming for Baptism. Rejoice, O Adam, with our first mother; hide not yourself as in Paradise of old. For seeing us naked He has appeared, to clothe us with our first garment. Christ has appeared, to renew the whole of creation. Theophany means the "Manifestation of God." Jesus' Baptism by St. John the Forerunner in the Jordan was the beginning of His public ministry. All three Persons of the Trinity were shown forth at one time and place: the Father testified from on high to the divine Sonship of Jesus; the Son received His Father's testimony; the Holy Spirit was seen in the form of a dove descending from the Father and resting upon the Son. Personification of the Sea and the Jordan are seen in the water, recalling the words of Psalm 113: "The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back." On the left, we see the olive tree with the branch cut off and the ax laying across it. This signifies that this is the divide between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and we are grafted into spiritual Israel, the Church, by Baptism. See the poster at the end of this

bulletin for more on the Feast of Theophany. Other January Feasts . . . Other major feasts during January include: Synaxis of St John the Forerunner, January 7th; St Anthony the Great, January 17th; Euthymios the Great, January 20th, St Gregory the Theologian, January 25th and the Three Hierarchs, January 30th.

Blessing of Water and Homes . . . January 6 is Holy Theophany where we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord. The difference between His Baptism and our baptism is that when we are baptized, we are changed. When Jesus was baptized, He changed the water. We will do the service of the Blessing of the Water at Liturgy on Sunday January 5 bring a small container. If you don't have one, we will make them available in the church. With the Feast of Theophany begins a season for the Blessing of Homes. There are two goals in this: 1) To recognize the Baptism of our Lord and our own as well and 2) To pray for God's blessing on our homes and our families. God made our bodies as well as our souls and is concerned with the whole; where we eat, where we sleep, what we drive, our pets – May God bring his blessing to it all. Blessings will take place on:

- Sunday, January 12, homes East of Gulfport by Fr Dean,
- Sunday, January 19, homes West of our church by Fr Dean.

If you would like your home blessed, contact George Yurchak at 228-860-3376 or georgeyurchak@yahoo.com who will make the arrangements with Fr Dean , and accompany him to your home.

January 12, Vasilopita . . . We will have the Greek tradition of cutting the Vasilopita Bread on January 12 after Liturgy. We will have a Pot Luck Luncheon to follow. Please bring one of your favorite ethnic dishes for the occasion to share with all. On this day we will also continue the tradition of taking a collection for St Basil's Academy, the orphanage maintained by the Archdiocese in upstate New York.

Russian Christmas on a Ship Program, Now on January 15 . . . Holy Trinity will once again visit a ship in Gulfport Harbor to help Ukrainian and Russian seamen help celebrate their Russian Christmas (usually January 7 but delayed) since they are away from their home and families. We will bring the seamen gifts, sing Christmas carols and say the Lord's Prayer with them. We will also get a tour of their ship. We will meet at Gulfport Harbor at 11:30 am for the 12 noon – 1 pm Christmas Program on the ship. Let's support this program because the crew enjoy it. Contact George Yurchak if you are interested in attending (friends are welcome) at 228-860-3376 or georgeyurchak@yahoo.com. Complete details will be provided where to go on Sunday January 12.

General Assembly Meeting, Sunday February 2 . . . At the General Assembly we will bring everyone up to date on business from 2019 and a look ahead into activities in 2020. Treasurer's report will also be provided along with a Stewardship update.

2020 Church Calendars . . . The 2020 Church Calendars are available in the Church Narthex. They were donated by Irene Koskan, and George & Janie Mavromihalis in memory of several relatives.

January Birthdays . . . Happy Birthday to Leonardo Aron-January 3, Demetri Vlahos-January 10, Vona Wawryszcuk-January 12, Linda Peters-January 22, Natalia Petrovska-Kirkby-January 24, Elaine Stevens-January 26, Sheila Yurchak-January 30, Cyril Hugh Donohue-January 31. If we don't have your birthday please contact Sheila Yurchak at 228-297-0526 or sheilayurchak@yahoo.com.

Anniversaries for January. . . Brandi and Hugh Donohue will celebrate their 5th on January 10.

Church Thanks . . . Thanks to all those who have given their time and talents in helping out at Holy Trinity throughout the year. Your time and help contributes significantly in welcoming new parishioners, keeping up the church/grounds and keeping the church available for all Orthodox to attend. Thanks again to those generous parishioners who have brought their special food items for our after Liturgy social hour. Many thanks to Eleni Vganges, Virginia Freeman, and Donna Collins for making the Prosforo throughout the year. HUUUGE thanks to all those who gave their time and talent to the 2019 International Christmas Festival & Pastry Sale in helping make this event a very successful fund raiser. Thanks to George & Sheila Yurchak for putting together our Bulletin and Newsletter each month. Our sincere appreciation goes out to Fr Dean for driving from Mobile on Sundays and all the other days for special events, as well as Fr Paul for Holy Week Services. Also thanks to Fr. Ernesto and Fr Paul Costopoulos for driving down from Birmingham for Divine Liturgy.

Religious Needs . . . Clergy are available for talk, confession, pastoral counseling, spiritual care, individual prayer. Tours of our church can be arranged. If you want to set up an appointment, please contact George Yurchak – 228-860-3376 or georgeyurchak@yahoo.com.

Get Well . . . Prayers and blessings to Fr Jim Karagas, Karen Bridges, Elizabeth and Akaterina Vamvakas, Photine and Angelo Hagicostas, George Vaporis, Mitch & Lela Roberts, Virginia Freeman, Melissa Schwartz, Tom Portaritis, and Nikki Arnold. Fr Dean will conduct home visitations and give communion to those parishioners who are ill and can't be with us for Liturgy. Please contact a parish council member or the priest to make arrangements. If we missed someone please contact Nancy Malek at 228-265-1411. We want to pray as a community for those that may be too ill to be with us during church services.

Prayer Box. . . We have a prayer box in the Narthex. If there is anyone you wish a prayer said, place their name in the box, or contact Nancy Malek at 228-265-1411.

Ethnic Marketplace & Gift Corner

Please remember the Ethnic Marketplace and Gift Corner for your shopping needs. We have many ethnic items for sale. Included in the Marketplace are olive oil, halva, olives, jellies, pickled tomatoes, seaweed salad, candies, Greek cheeses and coffee, etc. In the Gift Corner we have Greek tablecloths and aprons, icons, bracelets, Greek coffeepot & coffee, jewelry, Greek CDs, incense and charcoal, Russian dolls, nesting dolls, lacquered Russian products, Russian kitchen supplies, Greek T-shirts, etc.

Prioritize Sunday as the Anchor of Your Family's Week

The Divine Liturgy is the primary worship service in the life of the Orthodox Church. It is where the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Savior is offered for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Simply put, attending the Divine Liturgy as a family should be a priority. The Lord's Day isn't merely the day we go to church – it is the primary day we become the Church – the people of God. (By George Tsongranis)

Prayer for the Military

We thank Thee, O Lord our God for all the blessings which Thou givest us. Thou has kept us by Thy power in good health during the night and Thou has called us up from sleep, that we may enjoy the light of day and to marvel at Thy Majesty. We entreat Thee, O Lord, grant that we may live this day without danger or sin, but full of Thy mercies and Thy divine care. Protect my family and the families of my fellow-servicemen from all evil. Enlighten the peoples who conquer and torture other nations; make them repent and seek peace, leaving other lands and their dwellers free.

Open Thou the eyes of our mind to see Thy divine law and incline our hearts ever to do Thy commandments, to the glory of Thine all-holy Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. O Thou Loving Father of us all, Who are here and everywhere, let Thy blessing be upon my loved ones at home. Keep them in Thy gracious care, protect them by Thy power and make their hearts glad in the thought of Thy nearness. Help them and help me to feel that however separated we are by distance, in Thee we are close to each other. Amen.

Chaplain W. Basil Stroyen, USAF, wrote to Metropolitan Leonty during the Korean War, asking him for a prayer which would be appropriate for use the servicemen under his care. This prayer was sent to him. He had copies made for distribution and for pasting in the Divine Liturgy book, which was used at Services. It was recited by the congregation following the Services and used by many of the servicemen in their daily lives. Just two years ago a copy was sent to him a serviceman, who had kept it in his wallet since 1955.

(Source: The Orthodox Herald, May 2003)

STEWARDSHIP

PLEASE REMEMBER TO SUBMIT YOUR PLEDGE FOR 2020. Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church wants to have all pledges in as soon as possible but no later than January 31 and is grateful for every donation received throughout the year. Your generous support enables Holy Trinity to spread the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ, serve regular Divine Liturgies and Sacraments and provide spiritual nourishment to our faithful, their families and those in need. Your pledge of support is a sign of your heartfelt participation in the life of our parish family and it plays a vital role enabling us to meet our financial responsibilities.

We pray that everybody who attends Holy Trinity and cares for its financial security will make a pledge for 2020. You can find a 2020 pledge form at church. It will soon be available to download on our website www/holytrinitybiloxi.org website, under Stewardship. We will be mailing you a stewardship form in the event you are unable to come to church. Please take a few minutes to fill out the pledge form and submit it to Craig Henderson (Stewardship Chairman), George Yurchak (President, Parish Council) or Rodney Bridges (Treasurer, Parish Council).

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH STEWARDS FOR 2019

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the 2019 Stewardship Program:

Chrisanthi Beach
Stavroula Beach
Mike Bodisch
Caleb Bridges
Rodney & Karen Bridges
Robert Brouillette III
John & Donna Collins

Steve & CoCo Collins
Nicoletta Conner
George Contas
John Demetrakopoulos
Hugh & Brandi Donohoe
Virginia Freeman
Natalya Gray

Dmitry Guzhvin
Angelo & Photine Hagicostas
Craig & Karen Henderson
Cristian & Meri Ionescu
Mihail Kastrinos
Chrisie Soula Kiessling
John & Cornelia Koniditsiotis

Irene Koskan
Oksana Kozhanova
Al & Kathy Lawson
George & Christina Loukatos
Maria & Peter Loukatos
Rena Lohrbach
Stratos Mandas
Eva Magiros
Carl & Nancy Malek
Sam Markopulos

Charikleia Mavros
George & Janie Mavromihalis
Louis & Linda Peters
Nataliya Petrovska Kirkby
Tom & Pat Portaritis
Melissa Schwartz
Jerry Strickland
Malama Thrasivoulou
Angelos & Elizabeth Vamvakas
Katerina Vamvakas

George Vaporis
Eleni Vganges
Spiro Vganges
Kosta Vlahos
Demetri Vlahos
George & Sheila Yurchak

Church Directory

Liturgical Services

Sundays – Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Church Clergy

Rev. Fr. Dean Gígicos

Chanters – Lead, Angelos Vamvakas,
Rodney Bridges, Hugh Donohoe, Luke Pappas,
Haylie & Ryan Waldrop, CoCo Collins,
Akaterina Vamvakas

Facilities Chair – Craig Henderson, Cristian Ionescu

Youth Education & Culture Committee

Chair – George Yurchak

International Christmas Festival

Chair – George Yurchak

Greek Culture Chair – Maria Loukatos

Ukrainian Culture Chair – Nataliya Petrovska Kirkby

Romanian Culture Chair – Meri Ionescu

Moldovan Culture Chair – Alexandru Tulburi

Russian Culture Chair – George Yurchak

Kazakhstan Culture Chair – Natalya Gray

Czech Republic Culture Chair – Helena Docherty

Parish Ministries

Youth Ministries – George Yurchak

Youth Group Chair – Joseph Lawson

Feed the Hungry – Jerry Strickland, Virginia Freeman,
Nancy Malek

Sunday School – Akaterina Vamvakas

Greek School – Vacant

Russian School – Tamara Manley

Ladies of the Agape Chair – Meri Ionescu

Stewardship Chair – Craig Henderson

2019 Parish Council

President – George Yurchak

Vice President – Craig Henderson

Treasurer – Rodney Bridges

Alternate Treasurer – Donna Collins

Secretary – Brandi Donohoe

Safety Officer – George Yurchak

Staff

Librarian Hugh Donohoe, Brandi Donohoe

Historian Brandi Donohoe, Akaterina Vamvakas

Marketplace – Manager, George Yurchak

Purchasing, George Yurchak, George Vaporis

Sales, Chrisanthi Beach, Sheila Yurchak

Kiosk – George Yurchak

Publications Editor – Sheila Hemenway-Yurchak

Artist in Residence – Sheila Hemenway

Cleaning – Chrisanthi Beach, Fanoula Christidis, Virginia

Freeman, Akaterina Vamvakas

Reader – Rodney Bridges, John Collins, CoCo Collins

Adult Education – George Yurchak

Prayer/Study Group – Nancy Malek

Outreach – George Yurchak, Brandi Donohoe, Akaterina Vamvakas

Web Master – Steve Collins

Pastoral Assistant – Craig Henderson, Caleb Bridges, Cristian Ionescu

Altar Boys – Joseph Lawson

Society of Wisdom – George Vaporis

Strategic Planning – Chair, CoCo Collins

Greek Dance Instruction – Steve & CoCo Collins

Art Coordinator – Helena Docherty