



HOLY CROSS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

859 First Street | Macon, Georgia 31201 | 478.621.0744 (office)
www.holycrossga.org | Facebook: HolyCrossMaconGA

Sunday, January 5, 2025

Eve of Theophany

Sts. Theopemptus and Theonas

Eothinon/Orthros Gospel: Sixth (Luke 24:36-53)

Mode of the Week: Third / Τρίτος

QR Codes (scan with smart phone for service texts)

Orthros, part 1



Orthros, part 2



Divine Liturgy



Upcoming Schedule

<i>Today, January 5</i>	9:15am Orthros 10:30am Divine Liturgy on the Eve of Theophany 40-Day Memorial for Presvytera Kalliopi Vastakis at the end of the Liturgy Blessing of the Waters at the end of the Liturgy Blessing and Cutting of the Vasilopita Coffee Fellowship in the Parish House after the Liturgy 1:15pm Adult Greek School 2:00pm Great Vespers for Theophany (Epiphany)
<i>Monday, January 6</i>	9:30am Orthros 10:30am Divine Liturgy on the Feast Day of Theophany (Epiphany) Great Blessing of the Waters at the end of the Liturgy
<i>Tuesday, January 7</i>	9:30am Divine Liturgy on the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist 11:00am Orthodox Book Study at Taste and See in Macon
<i>Saturday, January 11</i>	3:30pm Introduction to the Orthodox Church Class 5:00pm Great Vespers
<i>Sunday, January 12</i>	9:15am Orthros 10:30am Divine Liturgy on the Sunday after Theophany Sunday School for the Youth after Holy Communion (tentative) Blessing of the 2025 Parish Council at the end of the Liturgy Coffee Fellowship in the Parish House after the Liturgy 12:45pm Bible Study/Youth Greek School 1:00pm Parish Council Meeting
<i>Tuesday, January 14</i>	11:00am Orthodox Book Study at Taste and See in Macon
<i>Wednesday, January 15</i>	5:30pm Vespers 6:30pm Choir Practice
<i>Friday, January 17</i>	9:30am Orthros 10:30am Divine Liturgy on the Feast Day of St. Anthony the Great
<i>Saturday, January 18</i>	5:00pm Great Vespers
<i>Sunday, January 19</i>	9:15am Orthros 10:30am Divine Liturgy on the 12 th Sunday of Luke Sunday School for the Youth after Holy Communion Coffee Fellowship in the Parish House after the Liturgy 12:45pm Adult Greek School

Upcoming Epistle Readers: (1/12) Kostas Iakovidis, Richard Stewart; (1/19) George Saratsiotis, Cheryl Schwartzkopf
Upcoming PC Member On-Duty: (1/12) Natalia Saratsiotis; (1/19) Member at Large; (1/26) Parish Council President
Upcoming Ushers: (1/6+7) Norm+Eleni A.; (1/11) James S.; (1/12) Cleo B., Jim L.; (1/15) Tassie C.; (1/17) Norm+Eleni
Upcoming Video Operators: (1/6+12+17) Cristina Lekas; (1/19) Gray Y., David N.; (1/26) David Z.; (2/2) Natalia S.
Fellowship Hosts: (1/12) Georgia Saratsiotis; (1/19) Toula Tsamolias; (1/26) Danai Esquivel; (2/2) Denna B.+Irene R.

Our Parish Hymn of the Holy Cross of Christ:

Save, O Lord, save your people and bless Your inheritance. Give victory to those who battle evil and protect us all by Your Holy Cross.

Σώσον Κύριε τὸν λαόν σου καὶ εὐλόγησον τὴν κληρονομίαν σου, νίκας τοῖς βασιλεῦσι κατὰ βαρβάρων δωρούμενος καὶ τὸ σὸν φυλάττων διὰ τοῦ Σταυροῦ σου πολίτευμα.

To our Visitors and Guests: We extend a warm welcome to all worshipping with us today! While Holy Communion, following ancient practice, is offered only to Orthodox Christians, non-Orthodox may receive the blessed bread (antidoron) offered at the conclusion of the service.
Please join us in the Parish House after the Divine Liturgy for Coffee Fellowship!

Epistle Reading

Σῶσον, Κύριε, τὸν λαόν σου
καὶ εὐλόγησον τὴν
κληρονομίαν σου.

Στίχ. Πρὸς σέ, Κύριε,
κεκράζομαι, ὁ Θεός μου.

+++

Πρὸς Τιμόθεον Β' Ἐπιστολῆς
Παύλου τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα.

+++

Τέκνον Τιμόθεε, νῆφε ἐν
πᾶσι, κακοπάθησον, ἔργον
ποίησον εὐαγγελιστοῦ, τὴν
διακονίαν σου
πληροφόρησον. ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη
σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς
ἐμῆς ἀναλύσεως ἐφέστηκε.
τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν
ἠγωνίσμαι, τὸν δρόμον
τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν
τετήρηκα· λοιπὸν ἀπόκειται
μοι ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης
στέφανος, ὃν ἀποδώσει μοι ὁ
Κύριος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ὁ
δίκαιος κριτής, οὐ μόνον δὲ
ἐμοί, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς
ἠγαπηκόσι τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν
αὐτοῦ.

*O Lord, save Your people,
and bless Your inheritance.*

*Verse: To You, O Lord, I
cry; O my God. (Psalm 27)*

+++

*The reading is from Paul's
Second Letter to Timothy.
(4:5-8)*

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Timothy, my son, always be
watchful, endure suffering,
do the work of an
evangelist, fulfill your
ministry. For I am already
on the point of being
sacrificed; the time of my
departure has come. I have
fought the good fight, I have
finished the race, I have kept
the faith. Henceforth there is
laid up for me the crown of
righteousness, which the
Lord, the righteous judge,
will award to me on that
Day, and not only to me but
also to all who have loved his
appearing.

The Holy Gospel Reading according to St. Mark (1:1-8)

Sunday before Theophany

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ
Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὡς
γέγραπται ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, ἰδοὺ
ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου
πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς
κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου
ἔμπροσθέν σου· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν
τῇ ἐρήμῳ, ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν
Κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς
τρίβους αὐτοῦ, ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης
βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ
κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας
εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. καὶ
ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ
Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ
Ἱεροσολυμίται, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο
πάντες ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ
ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς
ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. ἦν δὲ ὁ Ἰωάννης
ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ
ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν
αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐσθίων ἀκρίδας καὶ
μέλι ἄγριον. καὶ ἐκήρυσσε λέγων·
ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω
μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς κύψας
λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν
ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ. ἐγὼ μὲν
ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ἐν ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ
βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ.

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 shall
prepare your way; the voice of
one crying in the wilderness:
prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight —'
John was baptizing in the
wilderness and preaching a
baptism of repentance for the
forgiveness of sins. And there
went out to him all the country
of Judea, and all the people of
Jerusalem; and they were
baptized by him in the river
Jordan, confessing their sins.
Now John was clothed with
camel's hair, and had a leather
girdle around his waist, and
ate locusts and wild honey.
And he preached, saying,
"After me comes he who is
mightier than I, the thong of
whose sandals I am not worthy
to stoop down and untie. I
have baptized you with water;
but he will baptize you with
the Holy Spirit."

HOLY CROSS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Theodore Ehmer

Προϊστάμενος/Presiding Priest

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Office Days: Tuesday through Friday: call or email Fr. for appointment

Holy Confession: call or email Fr. to schedule

Bulletin for the week of January 5, 2025

Ushers on Duty: Cleo Bennette, Charles Glotzbach

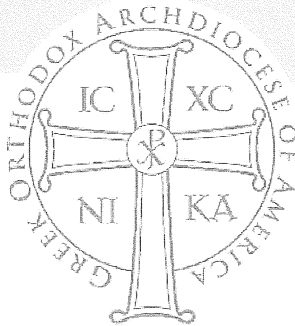
Video: Natalia S.

Altar Servers: All Adult/Youth Servers

Epistle Readers: Chad Ridley (Greek); Beth Zoumeris (English)

Fellowship Host (Thank You!): Vasilopita/Philoptochos

PC Member On-Duty: Sarah Drakopoulos



Today our Holy Orthodox Church commemorates:

- + The Holy Martyrs Theopemptus (Θεόλεμπος) and Theonas (Θεωνάς) (+303)

When the persecution of Diocletian broke out, Saint Theopemptus, a bishop, was taken for his confession of Christ, and convicted Diocletian to his face for his error and ungodliness. Remaining unhurt after cruel tortures, he was given poison to drink, which had been prepared by a sorcerer named Theonas. Protected by divine grace from this also, he drew Theonas to Christ, and after other torments, was beheaded. Saint Theonas was cast into a pit and buried alive.

- + Our Devout Mother Syncretike (Συνκλητική) (+350)

Saint Syncretike was from Alexandria in Egypt. She lived eighty-three years in virginity and asceticism, and became the leader and teacher of many nuns. What Saint Anthony the Great was to men, she became to women: a model of mortification of the flesh, of patience in afflictions, and of wise instruction; for this, she is known a "Amma," a title corresponding to "Abba." Towards the end of her long life, she was stricken with an exceedingly painful disease, which she endured with faith and magnanimity. She reposed in the middle of the fourth century.

- + Our Devout Father Gregory (Γρηγόριος) in Acritas

- + Our Devout Father Phosterios (Φωστήριος) the Hermit (+6th c.)

- + The Holy Martyr Sais (Σάις)

- + The Holy Martyr Theoeidos (Θεοείδος)

- + Our Devout Mother Domnina (Δομνίνα)

- + Our Devout Mother Tatiana (Τατιανή)

- + The Holy New Monastic Martyr Romanos (Ρωμανός) of Karpenisi (+1694)

Through the intercessions of Your Saints, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Variable Hymns of the Day in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (pg. 8 in the Small Book/pg. 37 in the Hymnal):

- *Weekly Resurrectional Hymn (Ευφραινέσθω τα ουράνια, Third Mode):*

Let the heavens be glad. Let the earth rejoice exceedingly. For the Lord has shown strength with his arm. He trampled death by death. He became the first-born of the dead. Out of the belly of Hades, He has rescued us, and to the world He has granted the great mercy. (Sung before and after the Small Entrance, Greek Text found in hymnal on pg. 106)

- *Hymn of the Forefeast of Theophany (Αλεστρέφετό ποτε, Fourth Mode):*

Jordan River once turned back when Elisha struck its stream with his mantle in the wake of Elias's ascent; and the water was parted to the one side and to the other. And thus the fluid stream became a dry way for him, a symbol and truly a type of Baptism, by which we now pass over the streaming passage of the present life. And Christ appeared at the Jordan River to sanctify the waters.

- *Hymn of the Holy Cross (Σώσον Κύριε, First Mode):*

Save, O Lord, save your people and bless Your inheritance. Give victory to those who battle evil and protect us all by Your Holy Cross.

- *The Kontakion of Forefeast of Theophany, (Εν τοις πείθροις, Fourth Mode):*

To the flowing streams today of River Jordan comes the Lord and cries aloud to John the Baptist, and He says, "Be not afraid to baptize me now; for I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man."

Guidance, Prayer Requests, and Announcements

This Week's Daily

Scripture Readings and Fasting Guidance:

Sunday, January 5: Eve of Theophany—Wine+Oil:

Luke 24:36-53; II Timothy 4:5-8; Mark 1:1-8

Monday, January 6: Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—No Fasting:

Mark 1:9-11; Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; Matthew 3:13-17

Tuesday, January 7: Synaxis of St. John the Baptist—

No Fasting:

Acts 19:1-8; John 1:29-34

Wednesday, January 8—Strict Fast:

Romans 6:3-11; John 3:22-33

Thursday, January 9—No Fasting:

II Timothy 2:1-10; Mark 1:9-15

Friday, January 10—Strict Fast:

Ephesians 4:7-13; Luke 3:19-22

Saturday, January 11—No Fasting:

Luke 6:17-23; Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 4:1-11

Prayer Requests:

Metropolitan Alexios, Fr. Symeon (mission priest supported by our parish), Fr. Mike, Panteleimon, Michael, Kassiani, Dimitrios, Georgia, Pavlos, Maria, Betty, Irene, Valerie, Dianna, Jeannie, Dawn, Kenneth, Mary, Kay, Helen, Nikki, Austin, Kiley, Garrett, Carolina, Maria, Laurie, Lindsey, Randy, Marina, Effie, Christina, Ashley, Brian, Bessie, Katerina, Link, Virginia, Karl, Colin, Mitch, Rinne, Michael, Christian, Paul, Lucas, Leo, Barry, Nicholas, Jude, Kevin, Andy, Karen, Vera, Adam, Debbie

Prayers for those recently reposed:

Presvytera Kalliopi (+November 24), Claudie (+December 2), Lula Belle (+December 19), Fr. George Makhlof (+December 20), Fr. Thomas FitzGerald (+December 29)

Prayers for expecting mothers:

Katina B., Schlyer J.

Prayers for Military Personnel and Their Families:

Aubriana Butchko, Kyle Glotzbach, Robert Ice, Aleksander Zajac

Prayers for our Catechumens and Inquirers into the Orthodox Church:

Alexander, Bobbie, Dakota, Hannah, Jessica, Mary Elizabeth, Mary Emma, Nate, Sophia, Sebastian, Susan, Tammy and pray for those who are seeking Christ and His Church!

Weekly Wisdom of the Fathers:

St. Nektarios of Aegina (+1920) encouraging us on our responsibility as baptized Christians, relevant as we celebrate the Feast of Theophany and the Baptism of Christ: "Christians, have we understood the great responsibility that we have taken on before God through baptism? Have we come to know that we must conduct ourselves as children of God, that we must align our will with the will of God, that we must remain free from sin, that we must love God with all our hearts and always patiently await union with Him? Have we thought about the fact that our heart should be so filled with love that it should overflow to our neighbor? Do we have the feeling that we must become holy and perfect, children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven? We must struggle for this, so that we may not be shown unworthy and rejected. Let none of us lose our

boldness, nor neglect our duties, nor be afraid of the difficulties of spiritual struggle. For we have God as a helper, who strengthens us in the difficult path of virtue."

Upcoming Celebrations This Week

Name Days—Chronia Polla, Many Years!

January 7: John Apostolou, John Cacavias, Bryan John Gordy, Sean Morris, John Santon, John Staurulakis

Birthdays—Happy Birthday!

January 8: Holly Economopoulos

Anniversaries—Congratulations!

None in the Records

(If you have a celebration that did not make it into the bulletin, please e-mail Fr. Theodore!)

Announcements:

* We will have a **40-Day Memorial Service** at the end of the Divine Liturgy for Presvytera Kalliopi Vastakis. Presvytera faithfully served our Holy Cross Church for many decades along with her husband, Fr. Mike Vastakis. May her memory be eternal! Αιώνια η μνήμη αυτής!

* We will have the traditional blessing and cutting of the **Vasilopita** after the Divine Liturgy today. Thank you to all those who brought and offered a Vasilopita for us to share. In the Parish House, there will be a collection basket which will go towards the ministry of the St. Basil Academy, an orphanage run by the Archdiocese.

* **Adult Greek School** will be taking place today at approximately 1:15pm today in the Chapel.

* **Youth:** Save the Date for our Parish level 2025 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival (SJCOF), Sunday, Feb. 2nd, immediately after Divine Liturgy. It's also Godparent Sunday - please make plans from now to have your children's godparents come and witness their presentations if you can! Detailed SJCOF email coming soon.

* An email has been sent regarding **House Blessings** which will take place after the Feast of Theophany and the **Great Blessing of the Waters** (held today and tomorrow), with the blessings beginning on January 6. Once again, house blessings will be arranged by area and there will be an online sign-up. If you need assistance in signing up, please contact Fr. Theodore.

* An **Orthodox Book Study** will begin this Tuesday, January 7 and meet each Tuesday at Taste and See Coffee Shop in Macon. We will be reading "Rediscovering the Goodness of Creation." Information and a scan of the Introduction was sent by email this past Friday.

* The **Enthronement** of our new Metropolitan of Atlanta, **Metropolitan Sevastianos**, will be taking place on Saturday, January 25 at 10:00am at the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Atlanta. More information can be found at the website: www.atlmetropolisevents.org.

* For those who still wish to make any **Stewardship Offerings** for 2024, this will still be possible for the first two weeks of January. Please contact the Parish Council Treasurer, John Apostolou, for more information.

CUTTING OF THE VASILOPITA

The first piece traditionally is cut for Christ, teaching us that we offer to the Lord, the first fruits of His blessings upon us. The second piece is cut for the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the third for St. Basil. The next piece is cut for the entire household hosting the event, and then a separate piece is cut for each family member and guest. Each person feels special and appreciated, having individually been remembered, receiving a portion of the blessed bread. Finally, a piece is always cut for the poor, reminding us to always keep a portion of our blessings for those who are in need. Hidden within one of the pieces of the Vasilopita is a coin or a small piece of jewelry. The person who receives the piece with the coin receives a special blessing. There is a strong connection between the piece of Vasilopita which is cut for St. Basil and the one that is cut for the poor. It is believed that the person who finds the coin in his piece of Vasilopita will not only come into God's good fortune for that year, but that he will also be in a position to care for the poor, widows, and orphans.

This connection is found in the teachings of the saint. "He who works ought not to work to serve his own needs but to fulfill the Lord's commandment, which says, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat.'" (Mt. 25, 35) As we are fed by the salvific love of our Savior this blessed season, may our new year be blessed with every good gift from above, especially the gift of giving.

HISTORY OF THE VASILOPITA



For centuries upon centuries, parents, grandparents and godparents have related the following to Orthodox children about St. Basil and the Vasilopita. One year, during a time of terrible famine, the emperor levied a sinfully excessive tax upon the people of Caesarea. The tax was such a heavy burden upon the already impoverished people that to avoid debtors' prison each family had to relinquish its few remaining coins and pieces of jewelry, including precious family heirlooms. Learning of this injustice upon his flock,

St. Basil the Great, the archbishop of Caesarea, took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defense by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance. By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He canceled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St. Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewelry which had been paid as taxes by the people of Caesarea. But now St. Basil was faced with the daunting and impossible task of returning these thousands of coins and pieces of jewelry to their rightful owners. After praying for a long time before the icons of our Master Christ and His All-Holy Mother, St. Basil had all the treasures baked into one huge pita. He then called all the townspeople to prayer at the cathedral, and, after Divine Liturgy, he blessed and cut the pita, giving a piece to each person. Miraculously, each owner received in his piece of Vasilopita his own valuables. They all joyfully returned home, giving thanks to God who had delivered them from abject poverty and to their good and holy bishop St. Basil the Great! In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St. Basil's love and defense of his people, Orthodox Christians have observed the tradition of the Vasilopita each year on January 1st-- the date on which St. Basil reposed in the Lord in the year 379.

Hymns from the Great Blessing of the Waters

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters, crying out and saying, "Come all, and receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, yes, of Christ, who has come in His epiphany."

You have come to the River as a man, O Christ our King; and You urgently request to receive a Baptism befitting a servant, at the hands of the Forerunner, all because of our sins, O good and benevolent Lord.

When You had taken the form of a servant, O Lord, You approached John, the voice of the one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" and You requested Baptism, although You were without sin. The waters saw You and were afraid. The Forerunner trembled in reaction, and he cried out and said, "How can I, who am the lamp, illumine You, who are the Light? How can I, the servant, lay my hand on You, my Master? I pray You sanctify me and the waters, O Savior, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Thoughts on Theophany/Epiphany from Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis

1) The appearance or manifestation of God (Theophany)

What God? Our God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As the *Troparion* of the Feast proclaims, on this day "worship to the Holy Trinity was revealed." The three divine Persons reveal themselves in a unique way to the world.

2) The appearance in the flesh of God Himself (Epiphany)

What God? Our God: Jesus Christ. "True God of true God," as we recite in the Creed. As the Evangelist says: "The Life was made manifest." And as the *Kontakion* of the day says: "Today Your Light, O Inaccessible Light, has shone upon us."

3) The theme of light, which gave the name to the Feast: Τα Φωτα, the Feast of Lights.

Of course it was a special day of enlightenment, of illumination (baptism) for those who on this day descended into the water to be buried and then rise with the Lord. That's why instead of the Trisagion Hymn we sing: "Those of you who have been baptized in Christ, have put on you Christ the Lord. Alleluia!"-- a reminder that the Catechumens were baptized on this day.

4) The Agiasmos, or sanctification of the water

This happens through the invocation and descent of the Holy Spirit. Indeed it is a great mystery (*mysterion*) of the Church. The blessed water becomes in turn a blessing of soul and body, healing of sufferings, and source of grace and power for the believer.

5) A cosmic event

Not only is man reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, but with the entire creation, which as a result of man's fall had also fallen, is now reconstituted. So does the Church chant: "By Your bodily appearance the land was sanctified, the waters blessed, the sky illumined; and the race of mortals is redeemed from the bitter tyranny of the Foe."

6) Cleansing

We want this holy water to become a cleansing agent for us, so "that those who drink it, may be purified in soul and body," as we say in a prayer. We want to learn from our Lord's example to be obedient and humble, contrary to what the world preaches. We want to bury the "old Adam," the nature which resists God's grace, and emerge renewed, regenerated, transformed.

7) St. John the Baptist's role

The Church praises, honors and extols St. John the Baptist, for having laid his hands on the head of Jesus Christ. It also speaks of Christ's condescension and humility in accepting baptism at his hands. Christ frees us by accepting to come in the form of a servant and voluntarily submit Himself to the servile act of bending His neck. What about us, who receive Him mystically, but really, in our hearts?