

## **Parish Prayer List (Living)**

*(Parish)*

Evangelos	Carolyn	Robert	Subdcn Jason
John	Maria	Anamay	Ron
Lawrence	Dianna	Rdr. George	JoAnn
Anthony	Paula	Kathleen	SJ
Beverly	David	Michael	Anastasia
Nina	Walter	Nathan	Mary
Thomas	Gloria	Thecla	Michael
Reader John	Kimberly	Matthew	Susan Mary
Sbdcn Maximus	Emilia	Photini	George
Magdalini	Constanka	Emil	John Howard
Barbara	John	Pam	Gracie
Olga	Marina	Hesychios	Elizabeth
Sophia	Danny	John L.	Evdokia
Nicholas	Mary	Rachel	Katherine
Lily	Theodora	Elizabeth	Joseph
Justine	David	Reader Mark	Silouan

*(non-Parish)*

Alexandra	Rachael	Thomas Pappas	Lillian Pappas
Christopher	Fr. Michael	Paige and Paul	Juan & Jennifer
Gabriella	Josiah	Jacob	Catherine
Anna	Andrew	Chris	Crystal
Ian	RoseJane	Gabriel	Marcia
Dale	Johannah	Lorrie	Brian
Hugh	Raymond	Judy	Mike
Ron	Clint	Peter	Maria
Michael	Timothy	Petrese	Mary
Joe	Sean	James	Michael
Sara	Ruth	Janet H.	Pam
Ana	Roz	Krista	Marty
Maria	Danny	Margo	Rob
Nancy	Kera	Vanessa	Emma

## **Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)**

Josephine Urban (+12/15)

Joseph Sumner (+12/16)

Dominick LoGalbo (+12/25)

Joseph Visconti (+1/26)

## **Thoughts from the Fathers**

But let no one imagine that humility can be achieved easily and without labor. On the contrary, it needs more effort than the practice of any other virtue. Why? Though man had received good seeds, the chief of the opposite seeds – the tares of pride - sown by the enemy of our life took root while he was asleep. For the same thing by which the devil had caused his own downfall to earth caused the miserable human race to fling itself down with him into the common ruin; and there is no other evil so harmful to

our nature as that which is caused by pride.

*Saint Gregory of Nyssa*

Glory to Him whose gift is poured out over humanity. Even though the human race is of flesh, yet He has effected that it should perform on earth the role of beings who are by nature incorporeal, holding those whose nature comes from dust worthy to speak of such mysteries - including sinners such as we, who are quite unworthy even to hear any utterance on such matters. But in His grace He has opened the eyes of our blind hearts so that we can gain understanding from the spiritual meaning the Scriptures and from the teaching of the great Fathers...

*Saint Isaac of Nineveh*

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## On the Holy Water of Theophany

by St. John Maximovitch

On Theophany, the Day of the Lord's Baptism, every year a great miracle is performed. The Holy Spirit, coming down upon the water, changes its natural properties. It becomes incorrupt, not spoiling, remaining transparent and fresh for many years. This Holy Water receives the grace to heal illnesses, to drive away demons and every evil power, to preserve people and their dwellings from every danger, to sanctify various objects whether for church or home use.

Therefore, Orthodox Christians with reverence drink Holy Water — a great Agiasma (holy thing), as the Greeks call it.

One should always have at home enough Theophany water to last the whole year, and make use of it at every need: in cases of illness, leaving on a journey, whenever one is upset, students prior to examinations, etc. People who drink a little Holy Water daily, before eating any kind of food, do well. It strengthens the powers of our soul—if it is done with prayer and reverence, and one does not merely expect a mechanical result from it.

Every priest should take care to bless a sufficient quantity of water for his church, so that it will be on hand for the course of the whole year for every need and to be given out to those who ask for it; and parishioners should provide themselves at Theophany with Holy Water for the whole year and even so that it can be kept for future years.

## ***Why Do We Have Our Homes Blessed?***

**by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.**

### **Begin Everything with Prayer**

Since we are reminded in Scripture to begin whatever we do with prayer, it has been the practice of Orthodox Christians for centuries to have new dwellings blessed either before or just after settling in. This has been extended to one's business or office, and even college dorm rooms. "The service performed by the priest to bless the new dwelling is somewhat similar to the consecration of a church [in the Russian practice] in that holy water, holy oil, and incense are used and a lesson from the holy Gospel is read. All the rooms of the house are sprinkled with holy water and each of the four outer walls are anointed with the sign of the Cross with holy oil, a candle placed before them, and after the censuring of the house, the lesson from the Holy Gospel is read [in Greek practice the service of the Small Blessing of Waters is generally done]. At the conclusion of the blessing, the inhabitants are blessed with holy water: the husband first, followed by the wife and then the children - the oldest first. Relatives and friends present are then blessed." (*Marriage and the Christian Home*, by Rev. Michael B. Henning, p.24.)

### **Back to "The Fall"**

From Scripture we know that whatever God created was good, but with "the Fall", evil entered the world, corrupting the creation. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to save it by effecting a "new creation". This is celebrated at Theophany, specifically with the Great Blessing of Water. "The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world - through its 'prime element' of water - in the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit." (*The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II, Worship*, by Fr. Thomas Hopko, p.127.) All the readings, hymns, prayers, and actions of the day speak of God's presence in our entire world and universe, His creation.

Through water all of the creation is once again sanctified by God, becoming good again, the way God had intended.

### **The Feast Of Theophany**

The Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany) commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. We know from the troparion of the day that "the Trinity was made manifest" to us. But there's more to it than this. "When Jesus descends into the depths of the river, there occurs a profound upheaval. It is not the one baptized who is purified, for he is spotless; but it is the water that is transfigured and illumined. This water, which was believed to be transparent and purifying, is in fact polluted, inhabited by evil spirits, servants of the old gods. ... By purifying the elements, by sanctifying matter, Jesus frees the cosmos from the powers of evil." (*The Incarnate God, Vol. I*, Catherine Aslanoff, French edition editor, translated by Paul Meyendorff, p.163.)

## **The Great Blessing of Water and the Home**

The Great Blessing of Water takes place at the end of that day's Liturgy. Since our homes cannot be brought to the Church, the Church - through the priest and cantor - go to the homes. There the service of blessing, which began in the church, is finished with the sprinkling of water in the home. Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 6/13). By sanctifying our living quarters, our private place, we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings. (In very large parishes a yearly visit may not be possible. In areas of the country where the winter is harsh, I know of at least one parish where houses are blessed at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year in September.)

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life. "There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day." (*Little Falcons: Water*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p.33.)

### **Weaving Christ into Our Lives**

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings." (*Marriage and the Christian Home*, p.25.)

If the priest comes to bless the home when the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home.

### **In Summary**

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!