

The Promise

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

WESTFIELD ✦ NEW JERSEY



January 2025 ✦ Volume 49, Issue 1

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Water Blessing

The feast of Epiphany or Theophany celebrates the baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River. Part of the observance of this feast is the blessing of waters. Two water blessing services are conducted, one on the day preceding the feast, January 5, and one on the day of the feast itself. In order to distinguish these two blessings, the former is sometimes called the “Lesser Blessing of Water” while the one conducted on the feastday is called the “Greater Blessing of Water.”

This becomes somewhat confusing. For you see, both services are exactly the same except that on the Feast Day of Epiphany one extra prayer is read. The confusion comes from some saying the two waters are different. One is meant to be drunk and the other is meant for blessing houses.

Holy Water is used in many different ways in the life of the Church. It can be used for drinking or sprinkling and is often kept with our icons at home throughout the year. The prayers said on these two days speak that the water is to be used for these and other purposes.

Because January 5 is a day of fasting, the tradition developed that people would go to church without eating breakfast, and fol-

lowing the service would drink the Holy Water. On the next day, the priest or parishioners would bless their homes with the Holy Water that is distributed on Epiphany. Because of this, some think that there is a distinction between the two waters, as if they are totally different.

While there is nothing wrong with the custom of preparing to drink Holy Water on January 5 and having our homes sprinkled with Holy Water on January 6, but to make serious distinctions when none exist is neither helpful nor appropriate.

What is important is to focus on Christ and understand why the day is meaningful and significant. The Holy Water is a sanctification of ourselves, our homes, and places of business. Let us be thankful for this blessing. In the Jordan River, Christ was baptized. From this event the mystery of the Trinity was made manifest and the public ministry of Christ began. Through Christ working in the Holy Waters we pray that, “all who draw of it and partake of it with faith may have it for the cleansing of their soul and body, for the healing of their passions, for



the sanctification of houses, and for every purpose that is expedient.”

If you would like your home blessed by Fr. Peter during the Epiphany season, please contact the church office or speak to Fr. Peter directly. This year, however, please don't feed the priest. Fr. Peter will gladly bless your home but this year he is unable to stay for lengthy visits. Each year the requests have increased so it will not be possible for longer visits. ❖

Epiphany Liturgical Schedule

Friday, January 3

Orthros 8:30 AM
Royal Hours of Theophany
9:30 AM

Sunday, January 5

PARAMONI OF THEOPHANY
Orthros 8:30 AM
Divine Liturgy and Lesser
Blessing of the Waters 9:30 AM

Monday, January 6

HOLY THEOPHANY
Orthros 8:30 AM
Divine Liturgy with the Greater
Blessing of Waters 9:30 AM

Tuesday, January 7

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
Orthros 8:30 AM
Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM

Wait for the promise of the Father



Dates in the Life of Our Church

January / February 2025

JANUARY

1	Naming of the Lord/St. Basil the Great
	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	Office Closed
3	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Royal Hours
5	Paramoni of Theophany
	8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	10:45 AM Sanctifying of the Waters
	Religious Education Classes Resume
6	Holy Theophany
	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	10:30 AM Great Blessing of the Waters
	Office Closed
7	St. John the Baptist
	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	11:00 AM Trinity Circle
	4:00 PM Greek School
9	4:00 PM Greek School

	5:00 PM Journey to Orthodoxy
12	8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
13	5:00 PM 10th Anniversary Celebration of Metropolitan Apostolos
14	4:00 PM Greek School
	7:30 PM Parish Council
16	Veneration of the Chain of St. Peter
	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	5:00 PM Journey to Orthodoxy
18	6:00 PM Parish Winter Dance
19	8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
21	4:00 PM Greek School
22	9:30 AM TOTs
23	4:00 PM Greek School
	5:00 PM Journey to Orthodoxy
25	3:00 PM Wedding
26	8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	11:45 AM Vasilopita Luncheon
28	4:00 PM Greek School

30	Three Hierarchs
	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	4:00 PM Greek School
	5:00 PM Journey to Orthodoxy

FEBRUARY

1	2:30 PM Wedding
2	Presentation of the Lord
	8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
4	11:00 AM Trinity Circle
	4:00 PM Greek School
6	4:00 PM Greek School
7	6:00 PM JOY/HOPE
8	St. Theodore the General
	8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	11:00 PM Baptism
9	Triodion Begins
	8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	11:45 AM Communion Breakfast
11	7:30 PM Parish Council



A Calendar Tells Us Much

An atheist complained to a friend because Christians have so many special holidays, such as Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and the like; and the Jews celebrate several holidays as well. But we atheists have no recognized national holiday. It is unfair discrimination.

His friend replied, "Why don't you celebrate April First? It is after all Fool's Day. A great historian said once that a good way to start historical analysis is by asking of a particular people what holidays they celebrate on their calendar. If one wishes to understand, for example, the Greek

people as over against the Jewish people, one can begin by studying what great events they celebrate on their national calendar every year. These events tell much about a people or nation. To understand the United States, for example, we have to look first at its calendar and the great



GOYA

Update

■ BY CATIE CARAYANNOPOULOS, GOYA PRESIDENT

I hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas! Happy New Year to all. Can you believe it is 2025! GOYA had an eventful December gearing up for the holidays. Our boys' basketball team competed in the statewide playoffs on December 7 and beat three other teams to make it to the championship game the following day. Although they fell short to Paramus, they represented us well and had immense effort, taking home the second-place trophy. The weekend after the tournament, we gathered together for our annual Christmas party. Before the Christmas party, we went caroling to a few elder-care homes and visited some parishioners in their homes to spread the Christmas spirit. We ended the night with pizza, a white elephant (a fun gift-exchange game), and an ugly-sweater competition. That Sunday some of our older GOYAnS helped in the annual Religious Education Christmas Program. Antoni Manousos (read a poem and played the piano), Catie Carayannopoulos (read a poem and played the piano), Ava Savvis (read a poem), Kathryn Campbell (played the piano). Toward the end of the month we went to a state-wide GOYA dance at our neighboring church, St. Demetrios in Union. We had a great time dancing and reconnecting with our GOYAnS through the state while taking funny photos with their dancing robot. To start the new year on a good note, we are gearing up to go on an exciting snow tubing trip on January 25! ❖

Stop by the GOYA table on Sundays to learn more!

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events it celebrates such as Thanksgiving Day and the Fourth of July.

In the same way, the religious calendar of the Orthodox Church reflects and expresses the whole history and faith of the Church. In the words of F. Heiler, "The Orthodox liturgical year is... a sermon on the mystery of divine love, and this sermon is preached in words more powerful and sublime than any that could come from the mouth of a preacher."

If I looked at your personal calendar, I could see how busy you are. But I would say, if I was allowed, take control of your

calendar, which is your personal life, and allow more time to be in communion with God. Take time to pray. Carve out time from now to attend church. A full calendar shows your dedication to certain things but it also shows the areas in which we can grow.

If you were to look at the liturgical calendar (each family of Holy Trinity receives a church calendar in January), you would see unfolded before your eyes the whole life of Christ from His birth to Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. By bringing into daily focus

the great events of the life of Christ, the Church year enables the Church to revolve around Him as a satellite around its star. It helps us remember the great events in the history of our salvation and makes them present again mystically so that we may relive them, participate in them, and learn from them. With the regularity of the yearly cycle, the Church calendar reminds us of what God has said and done for us in Christ. The liturgical year is a most effective instrument for the religious education of all. ❖

Journey to Orthodoxy

Join the next session of “Journey to Orthodoxy”

January 9, 16, 23, 30

beginning at 5:00 PM

If you've been paying attention to news outlets recently, you will have encountered news bits and articles about people joining the Orthodox Faith. Just google it and you'll see articles from New York Times, NPR*, New York Post, Wall Street Journal, The American Conservative.

For whatever reason, the phenomenon is real. Since the end of July, I have encountered over a dozen individuals who have inquired about Orthodoxy. What a great blessing from God. For this reason, a new religious course has begun at Holy Trinity called, “Journey to Orthodoxy.” It has already met for four weeks. Four additional weeks have been scheduled for January, 9, 16, 23, 30.

“Journey to Orthodoxy” is a class not only for those seeking to become Orthodox in a formal way. It is for all who want to delve deeper into the Church that was established by Christ and His disciples.

A faith journey is like any other journey. We want to make progress. And while everyone's situation is not identical, your situation is not unique. That is why I invite all to this class, from inquirers, catechists, to cradle Orthodox. We can all deepen our understanding about our faith, or at least take a “refresher” course.

History Changes but the Church Remains

Historically, The Eastern Orthodox population in America is dominated by immigrants from the church's historic lands and by their descendants. That is why we have various Orthodox jurisdictions here. America is represented by the Orthodox Church from Greece, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Antioch, Ukraine, etc. But in recent years, aided by more widely available information on the internet, the church has been attracting more attention from people with no ancestral ties to Orthodoxy, a trend that appears to have accelerated following the outbreak of COVID-19.

Converts are hungry for the right expression of the Christian faith. They have seen and experienced so much that has left them spiritually empty. They are finding a home in the Orthodox Church. Cradle Orthodox oftentimes lose the sense of Church and the treasures it contains to such an extent that one legitimately asks, where is their hunger for Christ. In one, we find zeal. In the other, routine and dispassion. So perhaps in the near future, with the decline in immigration from traditional Orthodox countries, our churches will be filled with converts and those who actively seek the true Christian Church.

Church View

The Orthodox Church has proclaimed from its formation a certain ideology that, because of social engineering and political ideology, is forbidden fruit amongst other Christian denominations. The prevailing idea since Christ established the Church is that there is only one Universal Christian society which is called the *oikoumenē*. The foundations of this can be found in Biblical texts and the early Church Fathers. In his letter to the Christians in Smyrna, St. Ignatius of Antioch states, “Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus may be, there is the Universal [*katholikē*] Church.”

The Orthodox Church proclaims that it is the continuation of the Church founded by Christ and His disciples and has remained unchanged in its expression since then. The term *oikoumenē*, where we derive the word *ecumenical*, is defined in the classic sense, meaning “for all who dwell on the earth.” Thus, the Church and the timeless message of the Gospel of Salvation are for everyone who dwells on the face of the earth. “God our Saviour, who desires that ALL should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one

Mediator between God and men, that Man Christ Jesus.” – 1 Timothy 2:4-6.

In our modern age, the term *ecumenical*, like so many other classical terms, has morphed into meaning a promotion of inclusiveness, diversity and constructed equality. And because of this, no church denomination is willing, outside the Orthodox Church, to say it is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. This is so because they view all religious dogma and teaching as valid regardless of contradictions. If there is an attempt to connect to the historic Church, then their dogma, interpretation of scripture, and practical application clearly show a divergence from the Church of Christ.

The Orthodox Church has remained unchanged throughout the ages and is the living vehicle through which we encounter the Trinity in its fulness. As the Church, we welcome all into Her body because the salvation in Jesus Christ is for the *oikoumenē*, for all people of the inhabited world.

I end quoting St. Paul to the Galatians, “For you are ALL sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ...There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all ONE in Christ Jesus.” – Galatians 3:26

It would be hard to imagine a more vicious, one-sided propaganda piece than this one and, if you want to see a blow-by-blow breakdown, read this post by Orthodox convert Rod Dreher: “The Cathedral Vs. The Orthodox Church.”

The NPR piece focused on a few wild people who have converted to Orthodoxy, including one white supremacist who was immediately excommunicated and has since moved to the fringe of the fringe. Yes, that man spent some time in East Tennessee. ❖

Archon Sunday at Holy Trinity

The Order of Saint Andrew is a venerable organization dedicated to the defense and protection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The Archons represent the interests of the Mother Church and our Archdiocese in all manner of public and private forums. The Archons seek to promote religious freedom around the globe and remind the world of the ancient Patriarchate of Constantinople. On Sunday, December 1 a special presentation was offered to the parishioners of Holy Trinity by Archon Peter Tarhanidis. Also, on that day, a creative Sunday School program introduced Sunday School students to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the challenges that His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I faces today in modern day Turkey.

One special area of the archon effort is entitled “SPROUTS”. Orthodox stu-

dents can play a significant role in realizing a better future for our Orthodox church through their faith, their works, and their commitment to learning about and taking an active role in the mission and vision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The Archon Ecumenical Patriarchate Global Educational Initiative “SPROUTS” is designed to provide students with an introduction to the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Patriarchate in an engaging and creative way. Our Sunday School educators serve as our partners to carry this work forward through our Sprout Lessons! Students will learn about the factors that shape their Orthodox identity and develop an appreciation for the ways in which our Ecumenical Patriarch and other Orthodox leaders work tirelessly to inspire, lead, and defend the Orthodox faith around the world.



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Let us pray for the Patriarchate of Constantinople and His All-Holiness as they face religious and personal restrictions in a land that is not Christian friendly. ❖



For more info visit: archons.org and archons.org/sprouts



Holy Protection Visit

On Saturday, November 2 over 55 parishioners from Holy Trinity visited Agia Skepi (Holy Protection) Monastery as part of an event from the Cultural Committee. It was phenomenal to see the progress of the monastery and the monastery's serenity created a peaceful environment. Parishioners spend the day and attended Great Vespers at 5:00 PM. Holy Trinity presented the abbess, (gerontissa) with a donation and parishioners enjoyed seeing the various chapels and experiencing the monastery bookstore. ❖



2025 Stewardship Drive

Please submit your 2025 Stewardship Cards
as soon as possible.

See our Church as it Could Be

As Orthodox Christians, we see the entire world as God's gift. The beauties of the created world should be seen as a sacrament of God's presence and a means to commune with Him. The thankful person, seeing that every good and perfect gift comes from

above, will offer back to God the many material gifts he has received from Him.

Our God is the One who performs miracles. With this in mind, it is possible for the faithful to move beyond the constraining concepts that limit our thoughts to what is only

humanly possible. If we faithfully do our part, God will lovingly return to us more than we could ever imagine. This is the true meaning of: "Your own from Your own." We will see our church, not as it is, but as it could be, with our humble gifts multiplied by God's generosity and love.

Your Stewardship Offering is an offering to God and He is the only One Who can increase and multiply your gifts. That is why you are asked to give generously.

Holy Trinity is an active and welcoming parish of dynamic stewards. Together we participate and grow in our faith through these ministries which teach the Orthodox Faith and unite us in service to one another and the greater community.

The Parish is asking each Steward to contribute \$2,200/family to help make our Stewardship effort successful. ❖



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

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Community Communion Sunday

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

February 9, 2025

Sponsored by **Holy Trinity Religious Education**

All are encouraged to invite their godchildren & godparents and come together in fellowship and faith in receiving Communion as a community and enjoying the breakfast to follow.

All parishioners, family and friends are welcome!



Reservations during Fellowship Hour on January 26 and February 2.

The form and payment can also be dropped off or mailed to the church office. **ATTN: Communion Breakfast**
\$14 for Adults \$6 for children under 12

Name: _____

Number of adults: _____ Number of children (12 and under): _____

Total \$: _____ Cash / Check # _____

Please volunteer to help
Saturday 2/8 and/or **Sunday 2/9**
by calling the chairperson,
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New Date & Location

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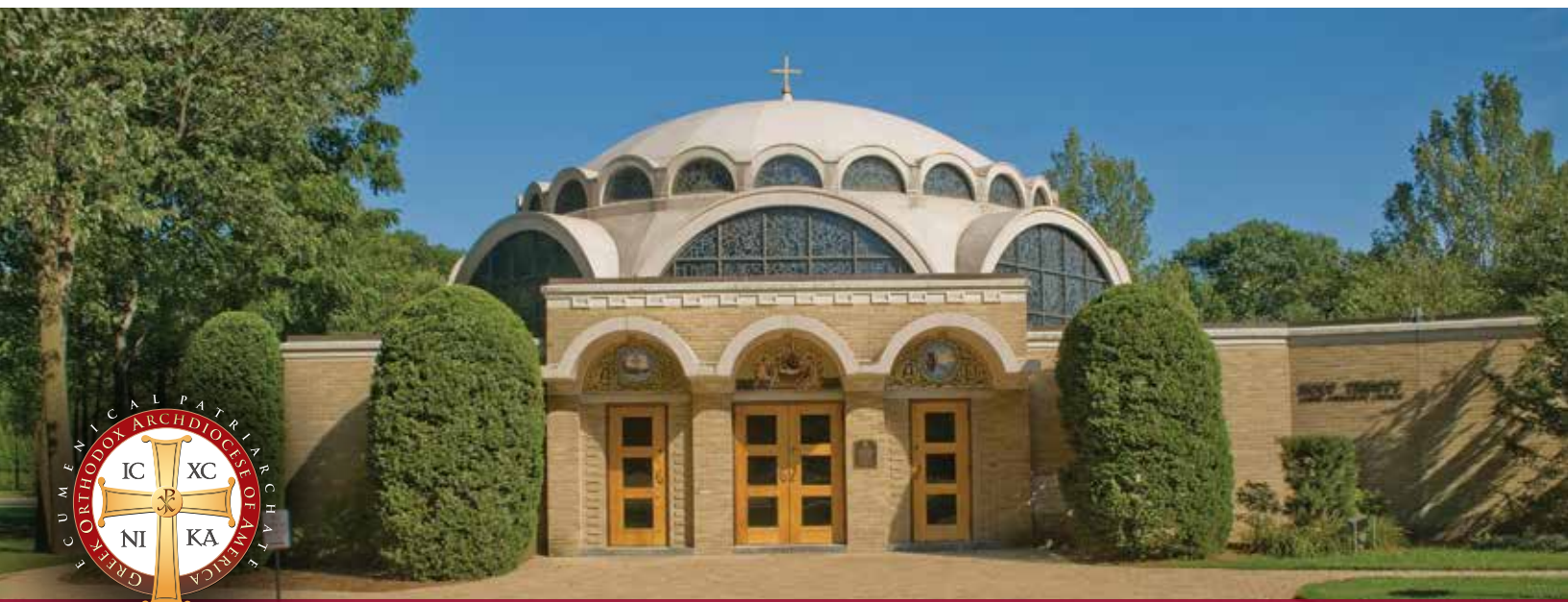
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Greek School PTO Zaharoula Ioannou
Youth (GOYA) Catie Carayannopoulos
JOY/HOPE Kathy Petsinis Paone
TOTS Valerie Comprelli
Bookstore Sandy Mouratoglou
Cultural Celia Kapsomera
Peter Tarhanidis
Trinity Circle Avi Kiriakatis
Fellowship Lauren Karanikolas
Scouting Miriam Kotsonis

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

	<i>Sundays</i>	<i>Weekdays</i>
<i>Orthros</i>	8:15 AM	8:30 AM
<i>Divine Liturgy</i>	9:30 AM	9:30 AM

THE PROMISE: VOLUME 49, ISSUE I

10 issues published annually.
No subscription fee.
Article deadline - 10th of the preceding month