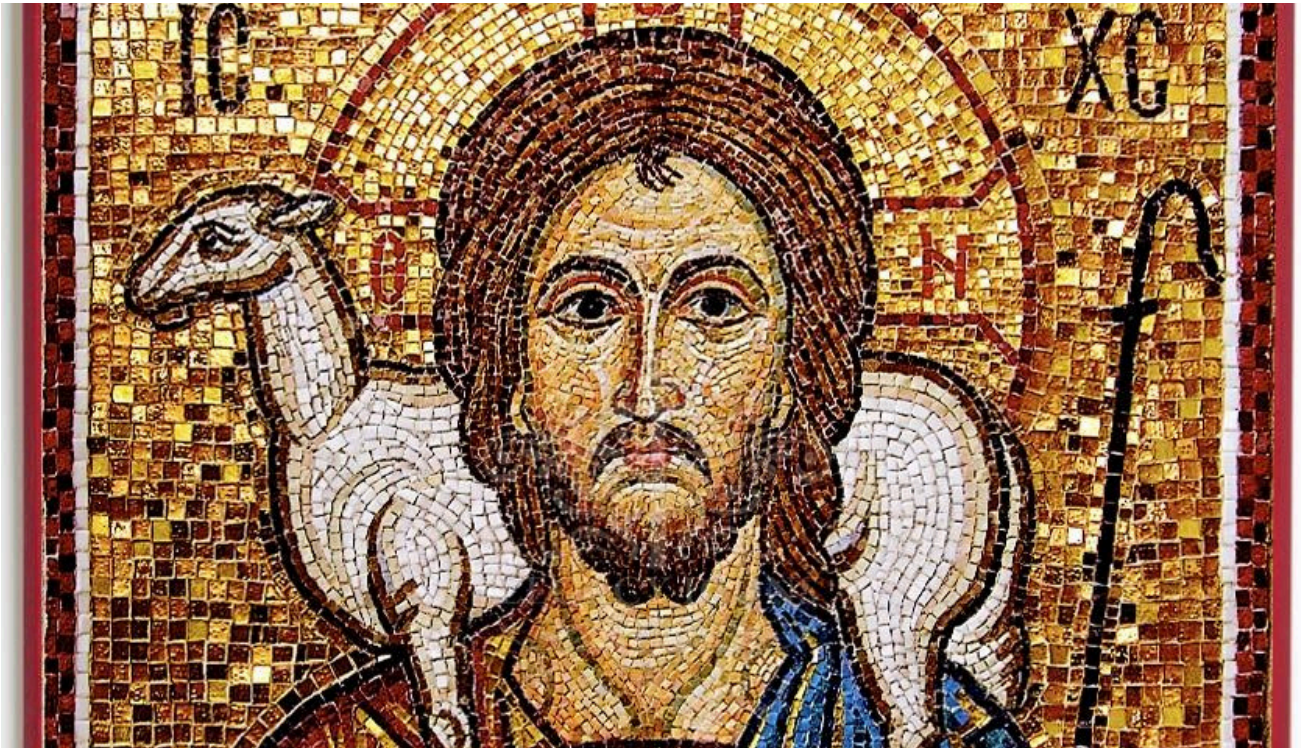


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# ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR

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## ***The Centrality of our relationship with Christ***

We have celebrated our Lord's Nativity and are heading into the festal season of Theophany, where we celebrate our Lord's shining forth. As we enter this new year, I would like to issue a challenge for each and every one of us to keep in mind. The central goal of the Orthodox Christian life and faith is to grow closer to our Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge is that everything in our lives should be prioritized in relation to this central goal of a closer relationship with Christ.

Here are a few thoughts related to this central goal to chew on. Everything in our Orthodox faith and practice is chiefly aimed at us growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ and His Gospel. We may not use everything the Church provides, but we should take advantage of whatever is useful and facilitates closeness with Christ. And yes, the Fathers of the Church do speak of us having a relationship with Christ, for example, St. Basil the Great tells us that "Through the Spirit, we enter into an intimate relationship with Christ. The Spirit unites us with Christ so that we may share in His Sonship."

(On the Holy Spirit, 15:36).

We should not be confused by our two-thousand-year Tradition with all its depth and beauty. The Tradition exists for us to have an intimate relationship with Christ because "To live in Christ is to live a life that is truly life, for it is not we who live, but Christ lives in us." (St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, Book 4). We believe that the Holy Spirit cultivates our Tradition, but even so, we do not worship it; we join with the Tradition to the level that helps us encounter God. With this in mind, we can reframe all the so-called "rules" of the Church. Why do we gather as Church on Sunday? Not because it is a rule, but because it helps us grow closer to Christ. Why fast? Why give of ourselves? Why meditate on the Scriptures? Why serve others? Because we want to grow closer to Christ.

***“There is nothing preferable to Christ. Unite yourselves with Him as the Church is united with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is united with the Father.***  
**St. Ignatius of Antioch**

Additionally, let's not be confused by the philosophies, political and otherwise, of this world. Orthodox Christianity does not exist to encourage any political philosophy. We are not Orthodox to become more masculine, "trad", disciplined, or to bring societal order. Orthodox Christianity doesn't exist to be exotic, beautiful, or mystical. Our Church does not exist to promote social justice. Orthodox Christianity does not exist to spread ethnic or cultural identities. Our faith and Church exist as ways of encountering and growing in relationship to Christ, and our desire should be to conform to His image as the Holy Spirit would guide us. "There is nothing preferable to Christ. Unite yourselves with Him as the Church is united with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is united with the Father." (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 6:1)

This year, May God bless us with the love of our Lord and our desire to know Him better as a compelling force in all of our life decisions. May God also protect us from losing this central goal and idolizing the philosophies and things of this world.

## The Great Feast of Theophany

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine “those who sat in darkness,” and “in the region of the shadow of death” (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). oca.org

## Theophany seivices

- Sunday, January 5th is a fasting day. After the Divine Liturgy, we will gather again at 1:00pm to serve the Festal Vespers with the indoor Great Blessing of the Waters.
- Monday, January 6th at 9:00am Festal Divine Liturgy for Theophany
- Sunday, January 12th, after the Divine Liturgy, we will have the Blessing of the Waters at Amerson Park.

## Annual Parish Meeting February 2, 2025

The Annual Parish Meeting is an opportunity for us to review our parish’s Mission and Ministries and connect with all that is going on in our community as a whole. An email will be sent out with the agenda, budget, and nominations, along with a voting members list. Not everyone is a voting member, but all are welcome to be present. Your participation and input will help shape the direction of our parish for the future.

## Many Years!

### January Birthdays

1 Edward Demenchonok, 3 Sandra Olsen, 12 Faith Andrews, 16 Mary-Sophia Savage, 18 Courtney Pittman, 20 David Scouten, 21 Timothy Marble, 24 Leann Almquist, 26 Joel Truhn, 27 Anton Osobov, 29 Stephanie Teel

### Anniversaries

1 Colin & Molly Croft  
12 Ray & Patti Lanier



## Theophany House Blessings

It is a tradition in the Orthodox Church to have your house blessed every year between the feast of Theophany (January 6) and the beginning of Lent (March 3 this year). In many places, after the water is blessed on the day of Theophany, the priest would go from house to house, blessing with the Theophany water. However, due to the distance of many people from the Church, it has become customary for the priest to be invited to a particular home to do a house blessing.

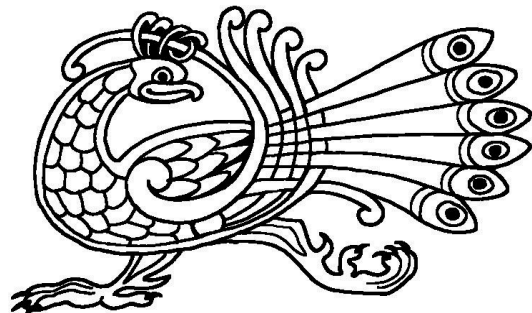
House blessings are a spiritual equivalent of spring cleaning. Over the year, our houses slowly collect dust and dirt. Similarly, our homes can become “spiritually dirty”. Therefore, it is essential to cleanse and refresh our living environment.

Usually, the priest will bring everything needed to bless the house. However, the homeowner can provide a few things such as an icon of Christ, a candle, and a list of first names for whom prayers are to be offered, including members of the family and all those living in the house. The list should have a clear distinction between the living and the dead.

Traditions surrounding the blessing differ according to local customs. When the priest comes, everyone in the house gathers around the icon with the candle. Often, the family will say the Trisagion Prayers and then help the priest sing the Troparion of the Feast of Theophany. Then, a family member, often the head of the household, leads the priest through the house with the candle. As he goes, the priest sprinkles holy water and prays for a blessing upon each room and the activity that goes on there. For houses that have never been blessed, the process is a little more involved, and Fr. Theophan will discuss this with you.

In many cultures, it is a pious custom to offer the priest a donation/gift. This offering to the priest is never required or even expected. However, if given, it is greatly appreciated.

If you would like to have your house blessed, please sign up with the Signup Genius link that was sent out via Realm.





**ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
**7301 Rivoli Road - Macon, Georgia 31210**



JANUARY 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Dec 29 (Fr. Thomas Alessandrini filling in) 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship	Dec 30 (Office Closed)	Dec 31 (Office Closed)  6:00pm Readers Vespers	1 (Office Closed)	2 (Office Closed)	3 (Office Closed)	4  9:00am Loaves and Fishes  5:00pm Great Vespers 6:00 SIOC Youth Firepit and Gamenight
5 Fasting Day  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 1:00pm Great Vespers with the indoor Blessing of the Waters	6 THEOPHANY OF THE LORD  9:00am Festal Divine Liturgy	7	8  6:00pm Daily Vespers	9	10	11  9am-4pm House Blessings Warner Robins 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession
12  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 12:20pm Blessing of the Waters at Amerson Park	13 (Office Closed)	14	15  6:00pm Daily Vespers	16  9am Divine Liturgy	17	18  9-2pm House Blessings Macon 3:00pm Parish Council Meeting 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession
19  8:30am Baptisms 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:20pm Family Church School	20 (Office Closed)	21	22  6:00pm Daily Vespers	23	24	25  9-4pm House Blessings Warner Robins 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession
26  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism	27 (Office Closed)	28	29  6:00pm Daily Vespers	30 Three Holy Hierarchs 9:00am Divine Liturgy	31	Feb 1  9:00am Loaves and Fishes 9-4pm House Blessings Macon 6:00pm Great Vespers with Litya

Please consult the Sunday bulletin for changes to the monthly calendar.



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FEBRUARY 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jan 26  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism	Jan 27 (Office Closed)	Jan 28	Jan 29  6:00pm Daily Vespers	Jan 30 Three Holy Hierarchs 9:00am Divine Liturgy	Jan 31	1  9:00am Loaves and Fishes 9-4pm House Blessings Macon 6:00pm Great Vespers with Litya
2 MEETING OF THE LORD  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Festal Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:15pm Annual Parish Meeting	3 (Office Closed)	4	5  6:00pm Daily Vespers	6	7	8  6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession
9 Publican & Pharisee  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship Church School	10 (Office Closed)	11	12  6:00pm Daily Vespers	13 (Office Closed)	14 (Office Closed)	15  4:00pm Wedding Rehearsal 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession
16 Prodigal Son  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 2:00pm Wedding	17 President's Day (Office Closed)	18 (Office Closed)	19 (Office Closed)	20 (Office Closed)	21  6:00pm Memorial Saturday Vespers	22 Memorial Saturday 9:00am Memorial Saturday Liturgy  6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession
23 Last Judgment (Meatfare)  9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship	24 (Office Closed)	25	26  6:00pm Great Vespers St. Raphael of Brookline	27  9:00am Divine Liturgy St. Raphael of Brookline	28	Mar 1  9:00am Loaves and Fishes  6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession

Please consult the Sunday bulletin for changes to the monthly calendar.