

ST. BASIL GREEK MELKITE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sherman Drive, Utica NY 13501

Saba Shofany, Pastor

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THE THEOPHANY FEAST

Monday, January 6 & Sunday, January 7, 2018

WEEKLY SERVICES

Daily Liturgy: Monday-Friday at 8:00AM **Holy Confession:** Every Monday at 4-6PM
Holy Liturgy: Saturday at 4:30PM, Sunday at 11:00AM **Vespers:** Every Saturday at 3:00PM
Matins/Orthros: Every Sunday at 9:00AM **Holy Rosary:** Every Sunday at 10:30AM

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Please continue to pray for our convalescing members, including Lorraine Chanatry-Howell, Nancy Gazal, Edgar Hallak, Mary Machis, & Rose Pawlinga. Please notify Fr. Shofany in case of illness

WEEKLY OFFERINGS: THANK YOU!

Weekly Collection Dec 31/ Jan 1: \$ 513.00 Memorial Services: \$ 00.00
Fuel: \$ 35.00 Home Visit: \$ 100.00 Christmas Offerings: \$ 27.00

† MEMORIAL MASSES †

THIS SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 2018 - THEOPHANY FEAST @ 4:30 PM

- † **Ida McHarris**, By P. A. Baddles
- † **Sister James Christin Steppello**, By Eleanor Steppello
- † **George Jweid**, By Tony Kawam

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2018 - THEOPHANY FEAST @ 11:00 AM

- † **Ida McHarris**, By P. A. Baddles
- † **Salwa Atallah-Hamati**, By Maggy Atallah
- † **Rose Reesh**, By her daughters

NEXT SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2018

- † **Ida McHarris**, By P. A. Baddles
- † **Anne Cragolin**, By her children
- † **George Jweid**, By Butch & Rosemary Jweid

NEXT SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2018

- † **Ida McHarris**, By P. A. Baddles
- † **Salwa Atallah-Hamati**, By Maggy Atallah

THANK YOU AND MANY BLESSINGS!

Sincere thanks to the parishioners who donated money for the purchase of Vestments for Altar Servants and Holy Altar Cloths: Mr. & Mrs. David George and Marcia Reesh. The entire St Basil Community appreciates and recognizes your generosity offered to St. Basil’s magnificent Altar.

The Parish Advisory Council & Fr. Saba

*** ANNOUNCEMENT ***

The next Parish Advisory Council meeting will be held on Mon Jan 8, 6:30 PM, Rectory Meeting Rm.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

John’s unique holiness is displayed in the story of the Theotokos’ visit to his mother Elizabeth. There the Gospel tells us that, at Mary’s greeting, the child in Elizabeth’s womb leapt for joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (see *Lk* 1:39-45). The Gospel thus shows John as aware even in the womb of the greatness of Christ who had been conceived in the womb of Mary. Thus he fulfills the prophecy made by the Angel Gabriel to John’s father, Zachariah: “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (*Lk* 1:45).

Reflecting on this event, St Ambrose connects the experience of John in the womb with that of another prophet, Jeremiah. This prophet, who lived during the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, describes God’s call to him: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (*Jer* 1:5). While Jeremiah describes himself as consecrated before his birth, Luke describes John as nothing less than filled with the Holy Spirit.

John reappears in the Gospels as an adult, living in the Judean desert and baptizing at the Jordan. This “desert” was not what we consider desert; it was actually grazing land, useless for agriculture but able to sustain the sheep and goats and the occasional solitary who lived there.

Nothing is said in the Gospels about the intervening years of John’s life, nor how he came to be in the desert. Some modern scholars have speculated that John was a member of the Essenes, a Jewish sect at the time which had retired to the desert and established a community there. Earlier lore, recorded in the fourth-century Life of John by Serapion of Thmuis, held that John was spirited away to the desert by his mother to escape slaughter when Herod’s servants killed the Holy Innocents. In Serapion’s Life, Elizabeth died when her son was seven years old; thereafter the boy was cared for by an ascetic in the desert.

The Ministry of John: St Mark’s Gospel presents us with a thumbnail description of John as a Forerunner, preparing the way for One greater than he by calling people to “a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (*Mk* 1:4). In St. Matthew John is depicted preaching “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (*Mt* 3:2). God’s action in Christ was immanent; those in need of repentance had best make up their minds to do so. In St. Luke specific examples for repentance are given in response to the question “What shall we do?” John tells the tax collectors not to extort more money than the tax law allows. He tells soldiers not to intimidate or accuse others falsely and to be content with their pay. And he tells everyone to give alms from what they have (see *Lk* 3:10-14). In St John’s Gospel, another note is added to the Baptist’s message. He identified Jesus as the One who is coming and depicts his own work as a testimony to Jesus. “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world ...I came baptizing with water that He should be revealed to Israel” (*Jn* 1:29, 31).

The Baptism of Repentance: Immersion into a stream, river, or bathing pool (*Mikveh*) was practiced for ritual purposes in first century Judaism. Orthodox and many Conservative Jews continue the practice to this day. Ritual baths were necessary for Jewish men in preparation for Yom Kippur or the Sabbath, for entering the temple or ascending the Temple Mount. Women were required to bathe for ritual purity after childbirth or menstruation. Gentiles submitted to a ritual bath upon converting to Judaism.

Some differences between these ritual baths and John’s baptism are obvious. Jewish ritual baths are self-administered; John baptized people into the water. Jewish baptism was a physical cleansing to achieve ritual purity; John’s baptism was to signify repentance, a moral act. In John’s time, Jewish people expressed repentance by offering sacrifices in the temple. Since the destruction of the temple, Jews express repentance by prayer, almsgiving, or doing righteous deeds. “Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Eleazar both explain that as long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now, one’s table atones”

(Jan leaflets 2018)