

Assumption of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church

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Philadelphia, PA 19145 * Church Phone: (215) 468-3535
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Mailing Address: PO Box 20083 * Point Breeze Station | Philadelphia PA 19145-0383

Sunday, January 14, 2024 | 32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Tone 7 – Leavetaking of the Theophany
The Holy Fathers slain at Sinai and Raithu
Saint Nino (Nina) Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia

V. Rev. Mark W Koczak, Rector

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Deacon – Michael McCartney Choir Director – Nina Patterson
Subdeacon – Daniel (Ken) Kavalkovich
Reader – Mark Klus Reader – David Pellack
Parish President - Matthew Andrews [Phone: 856.217.8075]

Weekly Schedule

Thursday: January 18 – Blessed Mother Olga Book Club at **6:30PM**
on the ZOOM media platform ONLY!!!

[Please Note: Rescheduled from next Thursday, since that day the 60th Diocesan Assembly will begin that afternoon!]

Friday: January 19 - March for Life in Washington, D.C. Orthodox Christians will assemble at 11:30am at the National Mall (At Madison Drive between 7th & 9th Street NW).

Saturday: January 20 – Great Vespers at **4:00PM**

Sunday: January 21 – Venerable Maximus the Confessor
Reading of Hours – 9:30am
Divine Liturgy – **10:00am**
Fellowship Coffee Hour to follow the Readers Service

Texts for the Liturgical Service

Troparion (Tone 7)

By Thy Cross Thou destroy death. / To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. / For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy. / And Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, / to proclaim that Thou are risen, // granting the world great mercy.

Troparion (Tone 1 – Feast of Theophany)

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, / the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. / For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, / and called Thee His beloved Son; / and the Spirit in the form of a dove / confirmed the truthfulness of His word. / O Christ our God, Who hast revealed Thyself // and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee.

Kontakion (Tone 7)

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, / for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. / Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry: / “The Savior has come to those in faith; // enter, thou faithful, into the Resurrection!”

Kontakion (Tone 4 – Feast of Theophany)

Today Thou hast shone forth to the world, O Lord, / and the light of Thy countenance has been marked on us. / Knowing Thee, we sing Thy praises: / Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, // O unapproachable Light.

Prokeimenon (Tone 7)

The Lord shall give strength to His people. / The Lord shall bless His people with peace.
v. Offer to the Lord, O ye sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!

Prokeimenon (Tone 4 – Feast of Theophany)

Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. / God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us.

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 6:10-17

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Alleluia (3x's) (Tone 7)

- v. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High Alleluia (3x's)
- v. To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night. Alleluia (3x's)
- v. Bring to the Lord, O sons of God, bring to the Lord young rams. Alleluia (3x's) [TONE 4]

Gospel Reading: Luke 18:35-43

Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

[Instead of "It is truly meet.." we sing the Hymn to the Theotokos]

Magnify, O my soul, the most-pure Virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts!
No tongue is capable of praising you worthily;
The angelic mind is overawed in exalting you, O Theotokos!
But since thou art good, accept our faith,
Since you are gracious and knowest our divine love,
Thou art the defender of Christians, and we magnify thee!

Communion Hymn:

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
The grace of God hath appeared for the salvation of all men. Alleluia (3x's)

Announcements

A Warm Welcome to all of our visitors & guests who worshiped with us today and who have joined us in celebrating the Divine Liturgy. Please join us in the church basement for our Fellowship and Coffee Hour.

Announcements

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE PARISHIONERS AND PARISH FRIENDS

Father Mark & Matushka Jan Koczak wish to thank you all for your prayers, kind thoughts, cards, and gifts for Christmas and for Matushka Jan's birthday. We rejoice together in the Birth of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, and in his Baptism by Saint John and witnessed by the Holy Spirit in the River Jordan. May God Grant Matushka Jan Many Happy, Healthy, and Blessed Years!

2024 House Blessing

If you wish to have your home blessed, please speak with Father Mark for date availability to schedule a house blessing. The blessing of houses will begin after Theophany, which is Saturday, January 6. Items of importance when having your home blessed: 1) have a candle available to be burned during the house blessing, 2) a bowl of blessed holy water, 3) an icon (preferably the icon of Christ being baptized in the Jordan River), and 4) please make enough space for Father Mark to maneuver in the rooms you wish him to bless.

Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28, 2024 after Divine Liturgy in the church basement. This is Notice #2 of 3.

According to Article IV, Section 2, Subsection A. of the Parish By-Laws, notice of all Annual and General Parish Meetings shall be announced in the Parish Bulletin and read by the Parish Rector from the amvon on three consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the Meeting. The Spiritual Advisor's report, the Treasurer's report, the voting on the 2024 budget, along with any other business that needs to be discussed. The election of the 2024 parish council officers took place during the Fall Parish meeting back in November 2023.

Cards for Our Troops! Save your UNUSED Christmas Cards!

Please save your *UNUSED* Christmas cards from this past year. Matushka Janine is collecting Christmas cards to send to the troops for this upcoming year. We will use the front cover and paste it on a new card, write an appropriate verse on the inside of the card, and address the card to our soldiers. Please consider donating your cards you received this year. Please see Matushka Janine as to where to drop off your Christmas cards at a designated area in the church basement, or whether she will collect them directly. As always, thank you for your generosity!

2024 Saint Tikhon's Church Calendars are now available

The parish received its order of 2024 Saint Tikhon's Calendars. We have begun distributing the calendars to the parishioners. If you're in church, please ensure your household gets its calendar. Thank You!

Announcements (cont.)

Candles and Prayers for the Faithful and Departed

Health for the Living:

Jane Holefelder offered by Nina Patterson
Zachary Walker offered by David Pellack
Family and Parishioners offered by Nina Patterson
Patricia, Catherine, Barbara, Susan, offered by M/M K Kavalkovich
Mrs. Patterson, Miss Debbie, Emily, Edward offered by M/M K Kavalkovich

May God Grant Them Many Blessed Years!

Memory for the Departed:

May Their Memories Be Eternal!

Vigil Cross Candles – 1/7/24

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Please remember in your prayers:

Norman Andrews; Emily Gerasimoff; Jane Kelly; Anne (Homa) Killoran; Justine McCann and her unborn child; Sheba Patton; Peter Witiak; and all those who are serving in our Armed Forces!

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Announcements (cont.)

Please ensure that your Mobile Phone is set to Silent (or at least set on vibrate) during the Divine Liturgy! Thank You!!!

*******Special weekly collections taken after Gospel or Sermon*******

In addition to our general collection, the parish takes a special collection each week to fund certain parish projects. By the action taken at the Fall General Parish Meeting held back on Sunday, October 10, 2021, the parish body approved that the special collection for the first three Sundays of the month be earmarked towards the repairing/fixing/replacing of the roofs of both houses that the parish owns (now known as the Row House Fund).

The fourth Sunday (and fifth, when it occurs) the special collection will be earmarked towards Charity.

This new collection schedule began back on Sunday, October 17, 2021.
Please be generous with your offering. Every little bit counts. Thank You!

Cash Flow Activity (December/January)

Week of Sun Dec 31 to Sat Jan 6

December Month (Unaudited)

Attendance:	33	34 (average)
	<i>For 2023 - the average attendance was 36.39</i>	
Funds In:	\$ 1,789.80	\$14,613.80
Funds Out:	\$ 8,331.59	\$13,865.92
Net Surplus/(Deficit):	(\$ 6,541.79)	\$ 747.88

Thank you all for your continuous offerings to maintain the parish!

Shop Rite Gift Cards: If you need to purchase Shop Rite Gift Cards, please see either David Pellack or Ken Kavalkovich to secure them. Your purchase of a Shop Rite Gift Card is an additional fundraising project that helps support the church at no additional expense to the purchaser.

Calendar of Events

2024 Monthly/Quarterly Schedule

- 1st Sunday of each month** – Monthly Panikhida immediately after Divine Liturgy.
- 2nd Tuesday of each month** – Bible Study at 6:30pm on ZOOM media platform.
- 4th Thursday of each month** – Book Club at 6:30pm on ZOOM media platform.
- 5th Sunday of each quarter** – Quarterly Parish Council Meeting after Liturgy.

Readers Schedule:

	<u>Today (Jan 14)</u>	<u>Next Week (Jan 21)</u>
3 rd Hour:	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
6 th Hour:	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
Epistle:	To Be Determined	To Be Determined

Fellowship Coffee Hour & Cleaning Teams:

If you have volunteered to host coffee hour, please check which Team you are on and when your Team is hosting coffee hour on the calendar printout which is located in the white/clear 3-ring binder located on the display case outside of the office room.

Please continue to check our parish website, social media pages, and your emails regularly for updated information on the parish regarding parish services & events in January and February 2024.

Thursday, January 25 and Friday, January 26, 2024 – The 60th Annual Diocesan Assembly will be held at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Harrisburg, PA. If you are interested in attending as a Lay Delegate to represent the parish or attend just as an Assembly observer, please speak with Father Mark or Parish President Matthew Andrews.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28, 2024 after Divine Liturgy in the church basement.

The Spiritual Advisor's report, the President's report, the Treasurer's report, and the voting on the 2024 budget will take place during the meeting along with any other business that needs to be discussed.

Sunday, February 11, 2024 – Soup N' Bowl VIII Challenge will be held in the church basement after Divine Liturgy.

We have two electric burners to be used to keep Soup warm and the remaining dishes we will use the Sterno heating trays to keep the dishes hot! Again, we will try to limit the number of food entrants between 4 to 6 dishes.



Holy Monastic Fathers slain at Sinai and Raithu [January 14th]

There were two occasions when the monks and hermits at Sinai and Raithu were murdered by the barbarians. The first took place in the fourth century when forty Fathers were killed at Mount Sinai, and thirty-nine were slain at Raithu on the same day.

Mount Sinai, where the Ten Commandments had been given to Moses, was also the site of another miracle. Ammonios, an Egyptian monk, witnessed the murder of the forty holy Fathers at Sinai.

He tells of how the Saracens attacked the monastery and would have killed them all, if God had not intervened. A fire appeared on the summit of the peak, and the whole mountain smoked. The barbarians were terrified, and fled, while the surviving monks thanked God for sparing them.

That day, the Blemmyes (an Arab tribe) killed thirty-nine Fathers at Raithu (on the shores of the Red Sea). Igumen Paul of Raithu exhorted his monks to endure their suffering with courage and a pure heart.

The second massacres occurred nearly a hundred years later and was also recorded by an eyewitness who miraculously escaped: **Saint Nilus the Faster** (November 12). The Arabs permitted some of the monks to run for their lives. They crossed the valley and climbed up a mountain. From this vantage point, they saw the bedouin kill the monks and ransack their cells.

The Sinai and Raithu ascetics lived a particularly strict life: they spent the whole week at prayer in their cells. On Saturday they gathered for the all-night Vigil, and on Sunday they received the Holy Mysteries. Their only food was dates and water. Many of the ascetics of the desert were glorified by the gift of wonderworking: the Elders Moses, Joseph and others. Mentioned in the service to these monastic Fathers are: Isaiah, Savva, Moses and his disciple Moses, Jeremiah, Paul, Adam, Sergius, Domnus, Proclus, Hypatius, Isaac, Macarius, Mark, Benjamin, Eusebius and Elias.

[Please Note: Beginning with this week's bulletin, we will be providing the *Lives of the Saints* for those who are not well known, not mention often, and who's historical information can be presented onto this page without leaving out important life events or continuing on another page or in an upcoming bulletin. Thank you for your understanding regarding this matter.]



Saint Nino (Nina), Equal of the Apostles, Enlightener of Georgia

The virgin Nino of Cappadocia was a relative of Great-martyr George and the only daughter of a widely respected and honorable couple. Her father was a Roman army chief by the name of Zabulon, and her mother, Sosana, was the sister of Patriarch Juvenal of Jerusalem. When Nino reached the age of twelve, her parents sold all their possessions and moved to Jerusalem. Soon after, Nino's father was tonsured a monk. He bid farewell to his family and went to labor in the wilderness of the Jordan.

After Sosana had been separated from her husband, Patriarch Juvenal ordained her a deaconess. She left her daughter Nino in the care of an old woman, Sara Niaphor, who raised her in the Christian Faith and related to her the stories of Christ's life and His suffering on earth. It was from Sara that Nino learned how Christ's Robe had arrived in Georgia, a country of pagans.

Soon Nino began to pray fervently to the Theotokos, asking for her blessing to travel to Georgia and be made worthy to venerate the Sacred Robe that she had woven for her beloved Son. The Most Holy Virgin heard her prayers and appeared to Nino in a dream, saying, "Go to the country that was assigned to me by lot and preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will send down His grace upon you and I will be your protector."

But the blessed Nino was overwhelmed at the thought of such a great responsibility and answered, "How can I, a fragile woman, perform such a momentous task, and how can I believe that this vision is real?" In response, the Most Holy Theotokos presented her with a cross of grapevines and proclaimed, "Receive this cross as a shield against visible and invisible enemies!"

When she awoke, Nino was holding the cross in her hands. She dampened it with tears of rejoicing and tied it securely with strands of her own hair. (According to another source, the Theotokos bound the grapevine cross with strands of her own hair.)

Nino related the vision to her uncle, Patriarch Juvenal, and revealed to him her desire to preach the Gospel in Georgia. Juvenal led her in front of the Royal Doors, laid his hands on her, and prayed, "O Lord, God of Eternity, I beseech Thee on behalf of my orphaned niece: Grant that, according to Thy will, she may go to preach and proclaim Thy Holy Resurrection. O Christ God, be Thou to her a guide, a refuge, and a spiritual father. And as Thou didst enlighten the Apostles and all those who feared Thy name, do Thou also enlighten her with the wisdom to proclaim Thy glad tidings."

When Nino arrived in Rome, she met and baptized the princess Rhipsimia and her nurse, Gaiana. At that time the Roman emperor was Diocletian, a ruler infamous for persecuting Christians. Diocletian (284-305) fell in love with Rhipsimia and resolved to marry her, but Saint Nino, Rhipsimia, Gaiana, and fifty other

virgins escaped to Armenia. The furious Diocletian ordered his soldiers to follow them and sent a messenger to Tiridates, the Armenian king (286-344), to put him on guard.

King Tiridates located the women and, following Diocletian's example, was charmed by Rhipsimia's beauty and resolved to marry her. But Saint Rhipsimia would not consent to wed him, and in his rage the king had her tortured to death with Gaiana and the fifty other virgins. Saint Nino, however, was being prepared for a different, greater task, and she succeeded in escaping King Tiridates' persecutions by hiding among some rose bushes.

When she finally arrived in Georgia, Saint Nino was greeted by a group of Mtskheta shepherds near Lake Paravani, and she received a blessing from God to preach to the pagans of this region.

With the help of her acquaintances Saint Nino soon reached the city of Urnisi. She remained there a month, then traveled to Mtskheta with a group of Georgians who were making a pilgrimage to venerate the pagan idol Armazi. There she watched with great sadness as the Georgian people trembled before the idols. She was exceedingly sorrowful and prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, send down Thy mercy upon this nation...that all nations may glorify Thee alone, the One True God, through Thy Son, Jesus Christ."

Suddenly a violent wind began to blow and hail fell from the sky, shattering the pagan statues. The terrified worshipers fled, scattering across the city.

Saint Nino made her home beneath a bramble bush in the garden of the king, with the family of the royal gardener. The gardener and his wife were childless, but through Saint Nino's prayers God granted them a child. The couple rejoiced exceedingly, declared Christ to be the True God, and became disciples of Saint Nino. Wherever Saint Nino went, those who heard her preach converted to the Christian Faith in great numbers. Saint Nino even healed the terminally ill Queen Nana after she declared Christ to be the True God.

King Mirian, a pagan, was not at all pleased with the great impression Saint Nino's preaching had made on the Georgian nation. One day while he was out hunting, he resolved to kill all those who followed Christ.

According to his wicked scheme, even his wife, Queen Nana, would face death for failing to renounce the Christian Faith. But in the midst of the hunt, it suddenly became very dark. All alone, King Mirian became greatly afraid and prayed in vain for the help of the pagan gods. When his prayers went unanswered, he finally lost hope and, miraculously, he turned to Christ: "God of Nino, illumine this night for me and guide my footsteps, and I will declare Thy Holy Name. I will erect a cross and venerate it and I will construct for Thee a temple. I vow to be obedient to Nino and to the Faith of the Roman people!"

Suddenly the night was transfigured, the sun shone radiantly, and King Mirian gave great thanks to the Creator. When he returned to the city, he immediately informed Saint Nino of his decision. As a result of the unceasing labors of Equal-to-the-Apostles Nino, Georgia was established as a nation solidly rooted in the Christian Faith.

Saint Nino reposed in the village of Bodbe in eastern Georgia and, according to her will, she was buried in the place where she took her last breath. King Mirian later erected a church in honor of Saint George over her grave.

Troparion — Tone 4

O handmaiden of the Word of God, / who equaled the first-called Apostle Andrew in preaching, / and emulated the other Apostles; / enlightener of Iberia and lyre of the Holy Spirit, / Holy equal of the Apostles Nina, pray to Christ God for the salvation of our souls.