

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

*(Parish)*

Evangelos	Carolyn	Robert	Sharon
John	Maria	Anamay	Ron
Lawrence	Dianna	Seraphim	Evdokia
Anthony	Pauline	Nadja	Jerry
Beverly	David	Michael	Anastasia
Nina	Walter	Nathan	Mary
Joseph	Duncan	Thecla	Michael
Reader Mark	Tatiana	Travis	Jason
Susan Mary	Clint	John	George
Magdalini	Connie	Emil	Sophia
Barbara	Yevgeniya	Roman	Ilija
Olga	Marina	Efthalia	Denny

*(non-Parish)*

Alexandra	Rachael	Jessilyn	Amanda
Christopher	Fr. Michael	Paige	Sean
James	Nicholas B.	Karin	Grant
Michael	Helen	Susan K	Blake
Anna	Brian	Kathy Tanner	Salvatore
Josephine	Nicholas (Nadja's brother)	Alma	Randy
Peter	Maria	Michael	Timothy
Petrese	Genevieve	Gus	Travis

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

Josephine Urban (+12/15)

Dominick LoGalbo (+12/25)

Joseph Visconti (+1/26)

Angelina Visconti (+2/14)

Olga Specian (+2/19)

Pauline LoGalbo (+2/22)

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## **Thoughts from the Fathers**

Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, January 10<sup>th</sup>:

The brother of Saint Basil the Great, he was at first a married priest, but when his wife, the blessed Theosevia, died, he was chosen and consecrated Bishop of Nyssa. He was distinguished by great secular learning and spiritual experience, and was a great preacher, a translator of the Scriptures and a theologian. As a result of his opposition to the Arians, they did everything in their power to crush him, regarding him as their chief enemy. They were so successful in this that, in the reign of the Emperor Valens, their confederate, they managed to depose him from his episcopal seat and drive him into exile.

This was in 376. The holy Father spent several years in patient exile, enduring poverty and humiliation. In 381, he took part in the Second Ecumenical Council, and it is thought that he formulated the final part of the Creed concerning the Holy Spirit. Finally, finishing his life at a great age in about the year 395, he entered into the Kingdom of God and has been commemorated through all succeeding ages as a great light in the Church.

*Saint Nikolai of Zicha (Velimirovich), The Prologue from Ochrid*

"Perhaps however, according to God's plan, it will come so that the people will gain an insight, to see the chaos fully bright and fully alive in front of them. To say: 'Oh! We are falling into chaos, we are lost. Everyone back, everyone back, turn back, we have become deluded.' And they will return back to the path of God and the Orthodox faith will brighten. This is what we ask for and this is how we want things, slowly-slowly, to happen by the Grace of God. God works in secret. He does not want to affect human freedom. He brings these things and, slowly-slowly, slowly-slowly, man goes where he must be."

*Elder Porphyrios*

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## ***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!