



Isaac, Daniel Isaac, John Isaac, Nawal Iseid, Sally Joseph, Nakhleh, Nicola, and Saba Khoury, Danny Mortensen, George and Renee Nassif, Aida Raffoul, Elaine Shaheen, Mary Salim, Michael Silpoch, William Sophia Jr.; Ola Alqazaha and newborn Christina (December 12<sup>th</sup>).

- We pray for those who are with child: Ghaida Awad.

### **Reception of Holy Communion**

*If you are physically able, please remain standing during Holy Communion.*

- Please remember ONLY ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS who have PREPARED THEMSELVES may partake of Holy Communion. If you have a special need or circumstance, please let one of the ushers know so we may assist you. Thank you -- St. George Ushers

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Today's special **ZALABEE COFFEE FELLOWSHIP** is hosted by *our St. George Altar Society*. They are taking donations to help in their ministry of decorating the church throughout the year ... please be generous!

Why Zalabee for Theophany? There are two reasons: #1 relates to the manner in which it was originally leavened. In olden days, the dough was prepared without yeast. Instead the dough was wrapped in cloth which was then tied into a bag, dipped three times in water ("baptized") and then suspended from the limb of a tree until it doubled in size (the water acted with enzymes to create a natural leavening); and #2 relates to the manner in which it is cooked. Rather than being baked, it is deep fried by being submerged ("baptized") in hot oil.

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP HOSTS** Available dates: January 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> ~ sign-up poster and hosting information is in the Lounge and includes: bringing whatever you wish to serve and cleaning up afterwards. St. George provides coffee, cups, cream, and sugar at a charge to the host of \$25. For more information, please see Manal Abuaita.

**2018 OFFERING ENVELOPES AND CHURCH CALENDERS** Please pick yours up (and other family members and friends) so we do not have to mail them! If your name isn't listed, call the church office. The calendars (please take 1 per family) are a gift from our Ladies Auxiliary, THANK YOU, LADIES! Our children will receive their envelopes in Church School. Parents, please make sure your child gets their *Offering Envelopes*. **Parents**, please make sure your child has received their *Offering Envelopes*.

**CREDIT AND DEBIT CARDS** We are now able to take Credit or Debit Card purchases and donations. If you would like to make a purchase or a donation, please come to the office during normal Office Hours (see below) or call to do it by phone.

**WEEKLY OFFERINGS** Our average weekly offerings need to be \$5,630 to meet our 2018 Budget. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, our offerings were \$4,762, so we were short \$868 ☹! God bless our Church School students who offered \$150.25 in December! If you haven't already, please fill out your 2018 Offering Form and support God's work at St. George!

**FEED GENESEE** Tomorrow the Soup Kitchen truck will be here to pick-up our donations. Items needed are on a flier in the Hall Foyer. All of the Orthodox Churches of Greater Flint are

supporting the work of *Catholic Charities in Genesee County* by helping to feed the hungry. Remember you may bring your items at any time to be put in the wooden *Feed the Hungry* container in the Hall Foyer. May God be with the needy and may He bless those who help them.

#### COMING EVENTS

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|-----------|--|
| THIS WEEK | The traditional fasting discipline is observed on Wednesday and Friday ( <i>no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish, wine, olive oil or their by-products</i> ). |
| Monday    | <b>Bible Study: Acts of the Apostles</b> 3-5pm   |
| Tuesday   | <b>Pan-Orthodox Book Club at St. George</b> 6-8pm  |
| Wednesday | <b>Bible Study: Acts of the Apostles</b> 12:30-2pm<br><b>SOYO Wednesday</b> 7-9pm  |
| Thursday  | <b>Becoming Truly Human at St. George</b> 6-8pm  |
| Friday    | <b>Euchre Tournament</b> 6:30pm  |
| Saturday  | <b>Teen SOYO Baking in Banquet Center</b> 1pm<br><b>Great Vespers and Confessions</b> 5pm  |

### JANUARY 7<sup>TH</sup> ~ ST. JOHN THE FORERUNNER, PROPHET, AND BAPTIST

In the Orthodox Church it is customary, on the day following the Great Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God, to remember those saints who participated directly in the sacred event. So, on the day following the Theophany of the Lord, the Church honors the one who participated directly in the Baptism of Christ, placing his own hand upon the head of the Savior.

Saint John, the holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, whom the Lord called the greatest of the prophets, concludes the history of the Old Testament and opens the era of the New Testament. The holy Prophet John bore witness to the Only-Begotten Son of God, incarnate in the flesh. Saint John was accounted worthy to baptize Him in the waters of the Jordan, and he was a witness of the Theophany of the Most Holy Trinity on the day of the Savior's Baptism.

The holy Prophet John was related to the Lord on His mother's side, the son of the Priest Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth. The holy Forerunner, John, was born six months before Christ. The Archangel Gabriel announced his birth in the Temple at Jerusalem, revealing to Zachariah that a son was to be born to him.

Through the prayers offered beforehand, the child was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saint John prepared himself in the wilds of the desert for his great service by a strict life, by fasting, prayer and sympathy for the fate of God's people.

At the age of thirty, he came forth preaching repentance. He appeared on the banks of the Jordan, to prepare the people by his preaching to accept the Savior of the world. In church hymnology, Saint John is called a "bright morning star," whose gleaming outshone the brilliance of all the other stars, announcing the coming dawn of the day of grace, illuminated with the light of the spiritual Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having baptized the sinless Lamb of God, Saint John soon died a martyr's death, beheaded by the sword on orders of King Herod at the request of his daughter Salome. (On Saint

John the Baptist, see Mt.3:1-16, 11:1-19, 14:1-12; Mark 1:2-8, 6:14-29; Luke 1:5-25, 39-80, 3:1-20, 7:18-35, 9:7-9; John 1:19-34, 3:22-26). The Transfer of the Right Hand of the holy Forerunner from Antioch to Constantinople (956) and the Miracle of Saint John the Forerunner against the Hagarenes (Moslems) at Chios:

The body of Saint John the Baptist was buried in the Samaritan city of Sebaste. The holy Evangelist Luke, who went preaching Christ in various cities and towns, came to Sebaste, where they gave him the right hand of the holy Prophet John, the very hand with which he had baptized the Savior. The Evangelist Luke took it with him to his native city of Antioch.

When the Moslems seized Antioch centuries later, a deacon named Job brought the holy hand of the Forerunner from Antioch to Chalcedon. From there, on the eve of the Theophany of the Lord, it was transferred to Constantinople (956) and kept thereafter.

The right hand continued to be kept in Constantinople. When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, sacred objects were gathered up at the the conqueror's orders and kept under lock in the imperial treasury.

In the Lives of the Saints is clear testimony that in the year 1484 the right hand of the holy Forerunner was given away by the son of the Moslem sultan Bayazet to the knights of Rhodes to gain their good will, since a dangerous rival for Bayazet, his own brother, had allied himself with them. A contemporary participant, the vice-chancellor of Rhodes, Wilhelm Gaorsan Gallo, also speaks of this event. The knights of Rhodes, having established their base on the island of Malta (in the Mediterranean Sea), then transferred the sacred relic they had received to Malta.

When the Russian Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) became Grand Master of the Maltese Order in honor of the holy Prophet John, the right hand of the Baptist, part of the Life-Creating Cross and the Philermos Icon (October 12) of the Mother of God (from Mt Philermos on the island of Rhodes) were transferred in 1799 from the island of Malta to Russia [because of the Napoleonic threat], to the chapel at Gatchina (October 12). In the same year these sacred items were transferred into the church dedicated to the Icon of the Savior Not Made by Hands at the Winter Palace. A special service was composed for this Feast.

Besides the Synaxis of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, the Orthodox Church celebrates his memory on the following days: September 23, his Conception; June 24, his Nativity; August 29, his Beheading; February 24, the First and Second Finding of his Head; May 25, the Third Finding of his Head; October 12, the Transfer of his Right Hand from Malta to Gatchina.

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- **OFFICE HOURS** Our secretary, Kelly Dotson, works Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays (10am-4pm) and Tuesdays and Wednesdays (1-4pm). Kelly can be reached at the church office 810-732-0720 or [kellysecstgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:kellysecstgeorge@gmail.com).
- If you would like to offer Holy Bread (*Holy Oblation*) in memory of a loved one, for the health or safety of a loved one, or to commemorate a special occasion, you may phone the church office (810-732-0720) by 12 Noon of the Wednesday before. If in memory of a loved one, please state whether you would like to have a **Memorial Service** near the end of Divine Liturgy. It is always appropriate to have this on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 40<sup>th</sup> day after one's falling asleep and also on the 6<sup>th</sup> month, and yearly anniversary.

Please join the Orthodox Churches of Genesee County &  
 The Mothers of The Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery  
 On January 18, at Assumption Orthodox Church, for our  
**6th Annual Pan-Orthodox Winter Dinner To Support**

# The Dormition of the Mother of God Orthodox Monastery

**Donation Requested**  
 \$35 Adult / \$25 Student

*The Mothers will be  
 bringing the Monastery  
 Gift Shop to Flint!*

**Evening Schedule**

- 5:30 - Vespers sung by the Mothers of Dormition Monastery
- 6:15 - Social Time
- 7:00 - Dinner & Speakers
- 8:30 - Benediction

| Names | Donation |
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**See your Parish Rep to make a reservation, volunteer your time or be a sponsor  
 OR: Contact Assumption Church at (810) 771-4611**

- Assumption.....Camelia Greenberg
- St. George.....Dn. Michael Bassett
- St. Mary Magdalene....Dn. Michael Schlaack
- St. Nicholas.....Deborah Adams

*~ 100% of your donation goes to the Monastery ~*

**ALL ACTIVITIES TO BE HELD ON 1/18 AT ASSUMPTION ORTHODOX CHURCH  
 2245 East Baldwin Rd., Grand Blanc, MI**

## THE TRADITION OF THE VASILOPITA

(pronounced "vǎ-sē-LŌ-ḡē-tǎ ")

The tradition of baking and cutting a special "pita" (which can mean a loaf of bread, a cake, or even a pie!) each year on January 1<sup>st</sup> is observed in honor of our Holy Father Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia - hence its name Vasilopita (*Basil's bread*). This tradition is observed in both parish churches and in the homes of the faithful. What is the meaning of this tradition and how did it begin? For centuries upon centuries parents, grandparents, and Godparents have related the following story to Orthodox children about St Basil and the Vasilopita.



*One year, during a time of terrible famine, the emperor levied a sinfully excessive tax upon the people of Caesarea. The tax was such a heavy burden upon the already impoverished people that to avoid debtors' prison each family had to relinquish its few remaining coins as well as pieces of jewelry, including precious family heirlooms. Learning of this injustice against his flock, St Basil the Great, the archbishop of Caesarea, took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defense by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance. By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He cancelled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St. Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewelry which had been paid as taxes by the people of Caesarea.*

*But now St. Basil was faced with the daunting and impossible task of returning these coins and pieces of jewelry to their rightful owners. After praying for a long time before the icons of our Master Christ and His All-holy Mother, St. Basil had all the treasures baked into one huge "pita." He then called all the townspeople to prayer at the cathedral and, after Divine Liturgy, he blessed and cut the "pita," giving a piece to each person. Wondrously each owner received in his piece of Vasilopita his own valuables. They all joyfully returned home, giving thanks to God who had delivered them from abject poverty and to their good and holy bishop, St. Basil the Great.*

In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St Basil's love and defense of his people, Orthodox Christians have observed the tradition of the Vasilopita each year on January 1<sup>st</sup> - the date on which St Basil reposed in the Lord in the year 379. In some places the Vasilopita is prepared as a loaf of rich bread (like that used for Artoklasia), while in other places it takes the form of a spicy sheet cake (without frosting). But no matter what form a Vasilopita may take, they all have one thing in common - each contains a single coin. After placing the bread dough or batter in the proper baking pan, the baker makes with the foil wrapped coin the sign of the Cross over it, closes his/her eyes, and then secretly places it into the unbaked Vasilopita.

After the Vasilopita is baked and cooled, it is blessed and cut following Divine Liturgy

for the feast of St. Basil on January 1<sup>st</sup>. At churches it is blessed and cut in the parish fellowship hall by the bishop or priest, and in homes it is blessed and cut by the head of the household. The blessing of the Vasilopita usually begins with the Apolytikion of St. Basil the Great, chanted in Tone 1:

Thy sound hath gone forth into all the earth that received thy word.  
Thereby thou hast divinely taught the Faith;  
Thou hast made manifest the nature of things that be;  
Thou hast adorned the ways of man.  
O namesake of the royal priesthood,<sup>1</sup> our righteous Father Basil,  
Intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.

Then the following prayer may be said:

Let us pray unto the Lord. Lord, have mercy. O Creator of all things, Lord and King of the ages, plenteous in mercy and bountiful in goodness, who didst accept the Magi's gifts in Bethlehem, who art the Bread of life that came down from heaven, who by Thine authority didst establish the seasons and the years and dost hold our life in Thy hands. Hear us who pray to Thee on this holy day upon our entrance into the new year of Thy goodness and bless (+) this loaf/cake, which has been offered to Thy glory and in honour of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Do Thou who art Benevolent, look down from Thy holy heaven and send down upon us, upon those who have offered these gifts and upon them that partake thereof, Thine heavenly gifts, for our hope is in Thee, the living God, unto the ages. Bless this parish (home, school, foundation, etc) and our entrances and exits; replenish our life with all good things and direct our footsteps that we may keep Thy divine commandments, for man shall not live by bread alone; Through the intercessions of Thy Most pure Mother, of our Father among the saints Basil the Great and of all Thy saints who from all ages have been well pleasing to Thee. Amen.

The sign of the Cross is then made over the Vasilopita with a knife while saying, "*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" All respond "*Amen.*" Then pieces of the Vasilopita are cut in the following order:

- 1<sup>st</sup> piece is set aside for Christ;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> piece for the Theotokos;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> piece for St. Basil, and the;
- 4<sup>th</sup> piece for the poor.

Then pieces are given to all present, beginning with the eldest and ending with youngest. He or she who receives the piece containing the coin is traditionally considered to be especially blessed for the New Year.

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek the name Basil means "royal" or "kingly."