

St. George Orthodox Church

5191 Lennon Road • Flint, MI 48507 • (810) 732-0720

Web Site: saintgeorgeflint.org

Father Joseph M. Abud, Pastor

Father Michael Bassett, Assistant

December 31, 2023

Christ is Born! *Glorify Him!*

المسيحُ وُلِد! فمجدوه!

Welcome to St. George! Thank you for attending today's Divine Services. If you are a first-time visitor, please register your visit by completing the guest book located in the narthex. We would appreciate getting to meet you after liturgy, so feel free to join us during Coffee Fellowship! Every Sunday we remember the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The word "*Liturgy*" means *work of the people* that means everyone participates through singing, praying, hearing the teaching, and opening our hearts to allow God's grace to enter. Anyone interested in learning more about our faith are encouraged to speak with one of our clergy.

Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion for Orthodox Christians: Orthodox Christians fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist by receiving Holy Communion in fulfillment of Christ's command *to eat His Body and drink His Blood*. In order to be properly prepared to receive Holy Communion, the faithful should fast (no food or drink from midnight the night before), the Sacrament of Confession (7 years and older) within the last 2 months, being at peace with others, and striving to always love God and their neighbor. Frequent communion and regular confession are recommended for all faithful Orthodox Christians.

For other Christians: We welcome you to this celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Unfortunately, we cannot extend to you a general invitation to receive Holy Communion. Orthodox Christians believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life, and worship of our community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, but for which we must all pray. All, however, are welcome to partake of the blessed bread (*antidoron*) which will be given when coming forward to venerate (kiss) the Holy Cross and receive the final blessing from the priest. Again, welcome!

Live Streaming of Divine Services

St. George is open for all parishioners and visitors. If you cannot attend, please pray with us through our livestream which can be seen on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SaintGeorgeOrthodoxChurchFlintMI>

If you have a smart TV, you actually have a web browser and YouTube app built in. All you have to do is start the browser app for YouTube and put the link in the address bar.

Holy Bread Offerings (*Oblations*)

- Prayers are offered for our parishioners who are ill, recovering, or in need, especially His servants: **Archbishop Alexander** (bishop of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Nicholas), our **Bishop Anthony**, **Fr. Joe Abud**, **Sahar Abdallah**, **Reader Fouad** and **Soad Abuaita**, **Philip** and **Janett Abuaita**, **Rasha Abuaita**, **Shafiq** Abuaitah, **Laila Abud**, **George Abueita**, **Georgette Abueita**, **Jane Abueita**, **Mary Abueita**, **Youssif Abousamra**, **William Alsahouri**, **Naila Banna**, **Vera Daoud**, **Said Farah**, **Elias Gantos**, **Subdeacon George** and **Suad Gantous**, **Phyllis Good**, **Ronald Haddad**, **Daisy Isaac**, **John Joseph**, **Karen Mortensen**, **Karam Nassar**, **Laura Nassar**, **Jeanette Nassif**, **Adam Odeh**, **Rahmeh Rashmawi**, **Elaine Shaheen**, **Michael Silpoch**, and **Sandy Thomas**.
- We also pray for the servant of God who has fallen asleep in the Lord: **Gena Basnett** (+November 28th, friend of Fr. Michael) ~ *may her memory be eternal!*
- We also pray for our expectant parents: **Ambur** (daughter of Joseph Haddad) and **Matt Allison**, **Gabriella** (daughter of Joseph & Mary Jo Ghattas) and **David Ayyash**, Drs. **Lindsey** and **Ryan Brunner**, **Casandra** and **Danial Burbar**, **Amira** and **Abdulla Farah**, **Andrea** and **Josh Jones**, **Christine** (daughter of Ayman & Wafaa Elias) and Dr. **Matthew Krinock**, **Kari** (daughter of John & Theresa Farah) and **Panagiotis Mikroudis**, **Vera** and **Luay Sababa**, & **Jacqueline** (daughter of Anwar & Janet Abueita) and **John Timm**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP is not hosted today ☹️. Please offer a donation to help cover our costs ~ *thanks!*

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP HOSTS Available dates: January 14th and 28th ~ sign-up poster and hosting information are in the Lounge. *Hosting includes bringing whatever you wish to serve, setting up, and cleaning up afterwards.* St. George provides coffee, cups, cream, and sugar at a charge to the host of \$30. **For more information**, please contact Manal Abuaita.

ST. BASIL'S BREAD (VASILOPITA) We remember and celebrate St. Basil the Great on January 1st. Part of our celebration is the making of St. Basil's Bread with two special coins (one for adults and one for children) and prayers over the bread in our Banquet Center which we will be doing today, December 31st. See the end of the bulletin for more information.

Divine Services for the **Theophany of our Lord**

- ❖ Friday, January 5th ~ **Royal Hours of the Theophany** – 6pm
- ❖ Saturday, January 6th ~ **Great Vespers** 4pm
- ❖ Sunday, January 7th ~ **Theophany of our Lord** (transferred from January 6th)
Festal Theophany Matins – 8:50am
Festal Theophany Divine Liturgy followed by the Blessing of Water – 10am

PLEASE HELP ~ KIDNEY NEEDED!

One of our parishioners is in desperate need of a kidney. Everyone has 2 kidneys, but only need 1 to live. Both of this parishioner's kidneys are not working properly. If you are interested and want more information, please speak with Fr. Joe ~ *thanks!*

SUMMER CAMP The Summer Camp Program at the Antiochian Village (about 1½ hours from Pittsburgh) serves young people ages 9-17 who come from parishes throughout the Archdiocese. The main goal of the camp program is to “*present to young people a living experience of the Holy Orthodox Faith in their relationship with God and other campers in an uncluttered, natural environment*”. For more information and to register, please check out their website at: <https://avcamp.org/summer-camp/>. We go to the 2nd Session, June 30th - July 12th. If you would like more information or have any questions, please speak with our Camp Coordinator, Anaam Abueita (810-962-1033).

Registration opens on January 7th at 6pm ~ DON'T WAIT, REGISTER on the 7th!!!

CAMP ST. GEORGE SUMMER CAMP Like the program at the Antiochian Village (see above), Camp St. George serves young people ages 9-17 who come from parishes throughout our Midwest Diocese (mostly the western part). After not meeting last year, they are hoping to bring Camp St. George back in 2024. But they need help. The most critical component in making it happen is sufficient staffing, particularly counselors. Will you consider to be a candidate? Applicants should be at least 18 years old, have a solid grounding in the Orthodox Faith, and be regular in Church attendance. They also need to exhibit patience while leading children in a faith-based, natural environment. Staff applications will be available at CSGlowa.org soon. Some details: Camp St. George meets June 30-July 6, 2024 at Camp Ewalu near Strawberry Point, Iowa. Staff arrive two days prior for training. For more information or questions, contact Camp Director Fr. Fred Shaheen at shaheenf@hotmail.com.

OUR STEWARDSHIP, OFFERINGS, & DONATIONS



Our stewardship, offerings, and donations are needed. PLEASE help your parish by continuing to offer your gifts! If you cannot come to church, you can simply go to our parish website (<https://saintgeorgeflint.org/>) and donate on-line (or use the QR code to the left) or you can bring or mail your offerings to St. George, 5191 Lennon Road, Flint, MI 48507. As always, THANK YOU for your generosity and love of our St. George!

COMING EVENTS

Fasting Discipline There is no fasting from our Lord's Nativity, December 25th until January 4th. The traditional fasting discipline (*no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish, wine, olive oil or their by-products*) is observed on Friday, January 5th in preparation for *Theophany*.

Friday	Royal Hours for the Theophany of our Lord	6pm
Saturday	Great Vespers and Confessions	4pm

The Medicine ~

The Medicine that is Free from Earth-Born "Logic"

by Abbot Tryphon, head of All-Merciful Savior Monastery on Vashon Island, Washington

Eternity is an everlasting banquet (the Divine Liturgy) that takes place in the heavenly realm. Every time we participate in the Divine Liturgy we are transported into a place where there is neither time nor space, and participate in that very banquet. As we receive the Holy Mysteries (Christ's very Body and Blood), we receive the healing medicine for that which ails us. Our brokenness in both body and soul are given the healing medicine that we so very much need.

God is everywhere present and fills all things. There is no where He is not. Hell fire is none other than the Fire of God, burning those who are unloving and unresponsive to His invitation to commune with Him. God does not send anyone to hell, for we sentence ourselves. Eternity with God necessitates a transformation of our souls, that we be purified in order to be engulfed by God's uncreated light. Without transformation the fire of God burns us, not because He desires we be burned, but because our fallen nature cannot withstand the presence of God without having been purified.

The Eucharist is the very medicine that God designed for this transformation. Our response should be one of humble submission to this invitation to commune with the very God Who created us. Holy Communion is meant to be the very agent that changes us, making us whole. The Holy Mysteries give us life. Frequent confession and communion are the means we have for change.

The Eucharist is both mystical and symbolic, and is understood to be the genuine Body and Blood of Christ, precisely because bread and wine are the mysteries and symbols of God's true and genuine presence and His manifestation to us in Christ.

The Holy Eucharist defies analysis and explanation in purely rational and logical terms, precisely because it is a mystery. The Eucharist, as is Christ himself, is a mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven which, as Jesus has told us, is "not of this world." The Eucharist, because it belongs to God's Kingdom, is truly free from the earth-born "logic" of fallen humanity.

Saint John of Damascus says, *"If you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it is through the Holy Spirit ... we know nothing more than this, that the word of God is true, active, and omnipotent, but in its manner of operation unsearchable"*.

THE TRADITION OF THE VASILOPITA

(pronounced "vǎ-sē-LŌ-pē-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 1st 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 1st - 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 1st. 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,¹ 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:

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

¹ In Greek the name Basil means "royal" or "kingly."