

January 2, 2022

Christ is in our Midst!

He is and ever shall be!

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.

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 in our Banquet Center! 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. We believe Holy Communion to be a sign that in Christ we have all things in common, share an identical faith, and are united fully to the Orthodox Church. Anyone interested in learning more about our faith are encouraged to speak with one of our clergy. Holy Communion can be given to Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting (no food or drink from midnight the night before), the Sacrament of Confession (7 years and older) within the last 2 months, and being at peace with others. Everyone else, including visitors, are invited to receive the final blessing of the priest and Holy Bread at the end of Liturgy. Again, welcome!

Holy Bread Offerings (*Oblations*)

- Steven and Kelly Sanderson for the health of their family and in loving memory of Uncle **Jim** Simpson (3/9 day).
- Elaine Salim for the health of her family especially husband **Ellis**, children **Edward** and **Staci**, and her **grandchildren**.

- We pray for the servants of God who have fallen asleep in the Lord: **Protopresbyter Thomas** George (+Dec. 6th, former pastor of Assumption Church), **Vera** Farah (+November 21st), **Emad** Issa Hawwash (+November 28th, uncle of Basheer Hawwash), **JoAnn** Haddad Merrelli (+December 6th, former parishioner and niece of Richard Shaheen), and **Edward** Shadeed (+December 29th, brother-in-law of JoAnn Hawkins).
- Prayers are offered for our parishioners who are ill, recovering, or in need, especially His servants: **Metropolitan Paul** and **Archbishop John** who are in captivity, **Sahar** Abdallah, **Asma** Abuaita (sister of Janett), **Shafiqa** Abuaitah, **Suheil** and **Abeer** Abuaita, **Laila** Abud, **Anwar** and **Georgette** Abueita, **Chelsy** Abufarha, **William** Alsahouri, **Sharon** Ballreich (sister of Nancy Silpoch and Deborah Salim), **Emil** Bathish, **Levi** Cooper, **Jennifer** Craft and **Brionna** Gorbitt (friends of Mariann Hayek), **Vera** Daoud, **Jimmy** David, **Ranna** Esho (friend of Batoul Burbar), **Averie** Fisher (niece of Doug and Sandy Thomas), **Elias** Gantos, **Mariam** Ghanim (mother of Manal Abuaita), **Phyllis** Good, **Amy** Handley (friend of Nataly Odeh), **Daisy** Isaac, **Loretta** Karpelena (mother Denise Ghattas), **Nicola** Khoury, **Lan** Kiley (niece of Raji and Sue Salomon), **Rafat** Nasri, **Laura** Nassar, **George**, **Jeanette**, and **Renee** Nassif, **Aida** Raffoul, **Roger** Saadeh, **Deborah** Salim, **Elaine** and **Ellis** Salim, **Nicholas** Saseen, **Elaine** Shaheen, **Michael** Silpoch, and **Georgette** Yusuf; **Rene**, **Natania**, and newborn twins **Xenia** and **Tatiana** Hanna (November 25th); **Panagiotis**, **Kari**, and newborn **Anna Emilia** Mikroudiss [daughter of John and Theresa Farah] (Dec. 8th).
- We also pray for our expectant parents: **Jasanta** and **Ghassan** Al-Khoury, **Cassandra** and **Daniel** Burbar, and **Yara** and **Mudaffer** Rishmawi.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP HOSTS Available dates: January 16th, 23rd, and 30th ~ 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, contact Manal Abuaita** (810-577-0028).

PROCEDURES As of early December, Fadi Rishmawi, Parish Council Chairman and Fr. Joe cancelled all activities, except Divine Services, because more and more parishioners were getting the covid virus. Further, while in our church building, everyone must properly wear masks. Please remember we can venerate icons at this time by bowing (*not kissing or touching*) and the same for the priest's hand and the chalice at Holy Communion. We all want the safest place for all of our parishioners to worship. We know that combining masks, vaccines, and boosters will protect ourselves and our community against this fast-changing virus. **PLEASE FOLLOW:**

1. Everyone must wear a mask inside our church building.
2. Pews in the back of the church are for those who are not vaccinated and those who would like to be social distanced.

ARE YOU VACCINATED? DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS AND NEED ANSWERS? We are blessed to have many medical professionals in our parish and they want you to get the Covid-19 vaccine. There is lots of wrong information on TV and social media. Don't be fooled; it could cost you, your family, or friends in a tragic way! If you have any questions or need truthful information, please contact Dr. Lindsey (Farah) Brunner by text ONLY please at 810-908-9213. If you or someone you know needs help to make an appointment or be driven to one, please call the office 810-732-0720.

E-MEMO'S If you would like to receive our weekly *St. George E-Memo*, please send your e-mail address to saintgeorgeflint@gmail.com.

TEXTING FR. JOE? Fr. Joe does not see or use texting services. If you have texted him, that's why he has not responded. If you need to contact him, please call the church 810-732-0720, his cell 810-444-9108, or by email nja@aol.com.

2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES AND CHURCH CALENDARS Please pick yours up (and other family members and friends) so we do not have to mail them! If your name is not listed, let Fr. Joe know. The calendars (*please take 1 per family*) are a gift from our Ladies Auxiliary ~ thank you, Ladies! **Parents**, please make sure your children gets their *Offering Envelopes* in the Lounge

COMING EVENTS

This Week	There is no fasting from Christmas Day December 25 th until January 4 th . The traditional fasting discipline (<i>no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish, wine, olive oil, and their by-products</i>) is observed on Wednesday and Friday.
Wednesday	<i>Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Water</i> for the Theophany (Baptism) of our Lord 6pm
Saturday	<i>Great Vespers and Confessions</i> 5pm

“IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE” ~ *We Must Be a Signpost Pointing Toward a Bright and Happy Future*

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

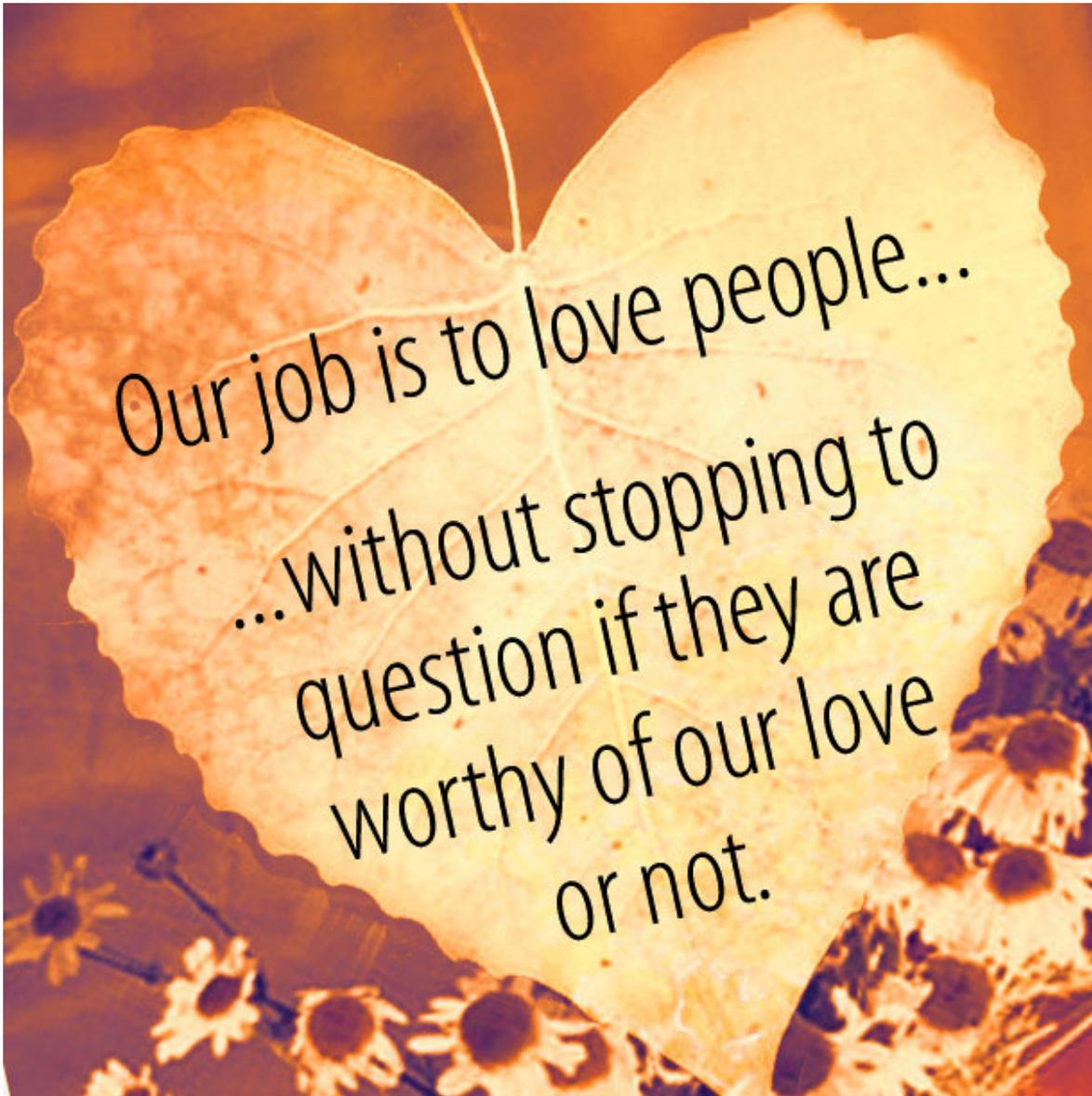
One of the most beloved movies ever made was Frank Capra's, "*It's a Wonderful Life*". Starring Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey, the movie tells the story of an ever optimistic man, who, while facing life's hardships, sets aside his own dreams in order to help others, only to witness a run on his bank. Feeling he had failed his family, his friends, and the bank's customers, and he was about to lose everything, George found himself struggling with the idea of committing suicide on Christmas Eve.

At the point in the movie where George utters the words, "*It would have been better had I never been born*", his guardian angel, Clarence, played by Henry Travers, shows George all the lives he has touched and how different life in his community of Bedford Falls would have been, had he never been born. George is allowed the gift of seeing firsthand the lives he has touched, and as a result learns to understand the miracle of family and friendship.

"It's a Wonderful Life" has become a favorite movie to watch for countless Americans, during the Christmas season, for the message is timeless. All of us have had moments where we felt we just couldn't go on, and suicide seemed like the only logical solution. As a young man I experienced a terrible period of depression and despair, and attempted suicide. Yet, when I hear from others how my daily blog and Ancient Faith Radio podcast, both under the banner, "The Morning Offering", have helped so many people, it is unfathomable that I was ever that despairing young man. Yet perhaps it is because I was that young man, that I am able to sympathize with those who are suffering, and help them see that this dark time can be the very catalyst for a bright future.

continued ⇨

It has been my experience that we are all called, at some time or another, to be Clarence, that funny guardian angel who points out the worth of another person, and reaches out with a loving embrace, and soothing words of comfort, and support. If, as Clarence, we pay attention to the fact that many people's high expectations for happiness during the Christmas season, will fall short, and leave them lonely and despairing, our own acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and smile of acceptance, will make all the difference in the world, and we will become that signpost pointing the way to a bright and happy future.



Get out your bible, find the Gospel of St. Luke, and read Chapter 10, verses 25-37 which is commonly called the "Parable (teaching) of the Good Samaritan"! Love, FJ

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."