



# Weekly Bulletin

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Witnessing to the Ancient Faith in Trumbull County for over 80 Years

**Father Brian Crivella**, Pastor

2021

Number 01

**The Friend of the Bridegroom: "He Must Increase and I Must Decrease."**

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Jan 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<i>28<sup>th</sup> Sun aftr Pntcst / Tone 3 / Forefeast of Theophany &amp; Saint Seraphim of Sarov</i> Readings: 2 Timothy 4:5-8      Mark 1:1-8 9:30 am      Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Jan 5<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Eve of Theophany</i> 5:00 pm      Vigil with Litya followed by the Blessing of Waters / AA Meeting
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Jan 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>The Holy Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ</i> Readings: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7      Matthew 3:13-17 9:30 am      Divine Liturgy
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Jan 7<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John</i> Readings: Acts 19:1-8      John 1:29-34 9:30 am      Divine Liturgy
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Jan 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Afterfeast of Theophany &amp; Ven. George the Chozebite</i> 5:00 pm      Great Vespers
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Jan 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>29<sup>th</sup> Sun aftr Pntcst / Tone 4 / Sunday after Theophany</i> Readings: Ephesians 4:7-13      Matthew 4:12-17 9:30 am      Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour

**ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / December 26<sup>th</sup>**

Attendance: (Adults: 42, Children 13)	55
Weekly Offering	\$1996.00
Candle Offerings	\$104.00
OCMC Adopt a Priest	\$50.00

**Holy Water**

At the vigil for Theophany holy water will be sanctified and made available for everyone to take home over the next few weeks. Don't forget to bring a jar or container!

**House Blessings**

Starting the week of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Brian will begin house blessings by appointment. Fr. Brian will give you a call a week in advance to let you know when he's in your area if you'd like to schedule for your house to be blessed!

**PRAYER CORNER + + + + +**

Fr. Ted Bobosh / Fr. Mark Leasure / Brother Andrew / Elaine Rankin (Joyce's friend) / Maria Nuzzo / The Miller

Family / Mark / Jim Renda / Julia Stan / Virgil / John Michael / Claudia Maksimoff / Richard Alberini / Jeremiah Roscoe / Dana Ronyak / Donnie & Cherie Davidson / Jennifer Brainard / Michael, Catherine, & Zoe Stan / Dana Lutz / Joanne Kaschak / Lilian / Alice & Matthew / Magie & Kenny Sanders / Bill Paluch / Nina Lowry / Josephine Grabko / James Livermore / Sarah Crivella / The Faculty, Teachers, and Students of Holy Trinity Orthodox Academy

**Newly Departed:** Kay Eckrote (11/21), Eleanor Dougherty (11/29), Michael Stanton (12/8), Ellen Marie Shiptenko (12/17) Helen Homolka (12/23)

**Expecting:** Matushka Carly & Fr. Alexander & Their unborn Children

**Birthdays:** David Campbell (Mon), Eveline Blonar (Fri), & James Lazor (Sat)

**Anniversaries:** Suzanna & John Verhovnik (Tues)

**Candle Commemorations**

<b>Theotokos</b>	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
<b>Altar</b>	In Memory of George Tutoki
<b>Christ</b>	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

# The Danger and Shame of Forgiveness

December 20, 2021 · [Fr. Stephen Freeman](#)

Forgiveness is so terribly hard. On a psychological level, it feels dangerous. The shame engendered by any insult or injury is our experience of vulnerability, and we instinctively react to protect ourselves. That, we must understand, is not a sin, it is an instinct that is a gift from God.

The example of Christ, who did not “turn His face from the spitting and the shame,” is also the example of just how difficult such an action can be. In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ agonizes in the face of the coming trial. He sweated blood.

I think the recurring problem of forgiveness is our effort to find a way around the danger of vulnerability. Is there a way to forgive and remain safe? In short, the answer is, “No.” Forgiveness is a voluntary self-emptying that embraces the vulnerability entailed in that action. Enemies have a way of crucifying you. The disciple is not above his master. If they crucified Him, there is no promise they will not crucify you. Forgiveness is not a safe thing.

We want to be safe. When we see that another person is sorry for what they have done to us, we begin to think that they will now become safe. We fear forgiving those who show no sorrow or who have not clearly repented of their actions towards us. And we do well to fear it. That is a completely rational, even “hard-wired,” instinctive response. But that tells us what forgiveness actually entails and what it is that Christ asks of us.

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Luke 6:34-36

The forgiveness in the commandments of Christ does not “hope to receive back.” It is not made in safety nor in the promise of a good outcome. We may expect “nothing in return.” Indeed, what can we expect if we forgive the “unthankful and the evil?” We can expect no thanks, and likely something unsavory in return.

Forgiveness in the Christian sense is properly an act of self-emptying. It is a voluntary act of foolishness in which we act in a manner contrary to the shame that has been cast upon us. Understood in this manner, forgiveness is of a piece with bearing the Cross itself. It is of paramount importance that the one act of general forgiveness offered by Christ is found in words spoken from the Cross. They could have been spoken from nowhere else.

There are a few things to note about the self-emptying of forgiveness. First and foremost, it can only be a *voluntary* offering. To force such an action upon someone would be toxic and harmful. God is not standing over us demanding our self-offering. Christ sweated blood in His own effort. No one could have more respect for what is involved in such an offering than God Himself. And so, the “commandment” of forgiveness should rightly be understood as an invitation to act in union with Christ who freely offered Himself on the Cross, “despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2).

The teaching of the Orthodox spiritual fathers is that we should forgive everyone for everything. Only in this can we be “like our Father in heaven.” But make no mistake: it is scary, hard, and without promise of safety or reward.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (Joh 14:21)

This is His promise.