

January 2015



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# SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## January 2015 Newsletter

Happy New Year!

Every year millions of people all over the world make New Year's resolutions. Whether it is losing weight, getting a new job, spending more time with family, saving money or whatever our desires may be, our resolutions tell us something about ourselves. Equally interesting is that most of us do not fulfill our resolutions. This also tells us something about ourselves. Many, realizing the failure rate of New Year's resolutions have resolved themselves to not make resolutions!

Our New Year's promises reveal that we long for improvement. Deep down, subconsciously if you will, we long to return to Paradise. Paradise can be described as a place of beauty, stability, and authentic peace with ourselves, God and others. If we are awake it is not hard to see that life in this fallen world is messy and in need of improvement. If we have a smidgen of self-awareness we also realize that the mess of the fallen world is firmly planted in each of our hearts. The natural response to seeing our



mess is to want to be better. It is a good thing to want to be better.

Our inability to fulfill the promises we make also tells us something about ourselves. We may long for "Paradise", however, we often want to enter this "Paradise" on our own terms. We especially

January 2015

want our “Paradise” to be obtained without much effort. Of course, real and lasting positive change of habits and/or direction in our lives always requires a change in lifestyle and lifestyle changes always require persistent effort. Everything that is good and has lasting value requires dedication and determination.

The modern gimmicky approach to weight loss is a good example of the way we are tempted to think. We all know that if we eat less calories than we expend in our day that we will lose weight. Less calories = less weight. However, it turns out that I actually like the comfort that food brings me more than the idea of achieving a healthy weight. Even though I may be uncomfortable in certain cloths, changing my habits is more uncomfortable. If only there was some way I could lose weight without changing anything!

Along with our desire that everything be easily and quickly obtained, we also might want to admit to ourselves that although we like the idea of Paradise, we also really like the way things are as we have them. All of our habits, constructive or destructive, give us some sort of benefit. As crazy as it may sound, we only do things that give us some sort of payback. Unfortunately, this means that some of us actually like the abuse we put ourselves through! If we don’t acknowledge the secret benefits we get from our bad habits than there isn’t much hope that we will be able to overcome them.

There is one final thing that Christians need to know about making New Year’s resolutions. If we want to succeed in anything that we resolve to do we need God’s blessing. This means we actually have to ask Him for guidance and support in the making and fulfilling of our resolutions. The truth is, often times we commit ourselves to undertakings that are not good for us spiritually or otherwise. The world view we are surrounded with teaches us that all we need to be is determined but in all actuality there is much more to the story. As Christians we must always remember the words from our Lord, “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

As we enter into this New Year lets ponder in our hearts the resolutions we have made. What does your resolution say about you? What are the secret benefits that sabotage the successful fulfillment of your resolutions? Have you sought God’s blessing?

Are you really willing to expend the effort necessary?

May God bless us in this coming year with the resolve to wake up each day seeking His blessing to guide us, strengthen us, and to do His will for our lives. May He also help us to never forget that the “kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12).

In Christ,

Fr. Theophan



### *Announcements*

- See Theophany service schedule on calendar below.
- See house blessing info below.
- Orthodoxy 101 will start up on Sunday January 11<sup>th</sup> at 1pm.
- The parish council will meet on Thursday January 8<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.
- Confessions are heard every Saturday from 5-6pm, before Sunday Liturgy if there is a need, and by appointment during the week.

### *Men’s Retreat*

On January 31<sup>st</sup> from 10am – 6pm we will be having a men’s retreat at Mark Dorogy’s farm on 373 Zellner Road, Culloden, GA. At this retreat we will focus on retreating☺ Please let Fr. Theophan or Mark know if you plan on coming.

January 2015

## *Book Club*

On Tuesday February 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm we will meet at Tom and Susan Kehayes' house for the book club. The book we will be discussing is *Saint Innocent, Apostle to America*. This book is a biography of St. Innocent. Copies are available in our bookstore for \$20. Light refreshments will be provided by the host. All are welcome.

## *Many Years!*

### *Birthdays*

January	1	George Moore
	6	Olga Uchakin
	17	Peter Hintermaier
	21	Carmen Luca
	24	Leann Almquist
	27	Anton Osobov
	28 J	ames Talley

### *Anniversaries*

1	Colin and Molly Croft
12	Ray and Patti Lanier

## *A quote for contemplation:*

Do not direct your gaze towards the enemy. Never get into a controversy with him whom you cannot possibly resist. With his millennia of experience he knows the very trick that can render you helpless at once. No, stand in the middle of your heart's field and keep your gaze upward; then the heart is protected from all sides at once. Tito Colliander, *The Way of the Ascetics*

## *Theophany House Blessings*

It is a tradition in the Orthodox Church to have your house blessed every year between the feast of Theophany and the beginning of Lent. In many places, after the water is blessed on the day of Theophany the priest would begin to go house to house, blessing with the Theophany water. In our times many people live further away from Church so it has become the custom for the priest to be invited to a particular home to do a house blessing.

House blessings are the spiritual version of a spring cleaning. Over the year our houses slowly collect dust and dirt, likewise our homes over the

year can become "spiritually dirty". It is therefore important to cleans and refresh our living environment.

For those of you who may be new to the faith or maybe have never heard of or seen a house blessing, the general process is as follows. First, if you desire your home to be blessed, you would need to invite the priest, setting a date and time for the house blessing. In many places it is the custom to have the priest and his family over for dinner and house blessing. Others simply invite the priest to come over and bless the house. Either way is acceptable, whatever works for the family is usually best.

In general the priest will bring all that is needed to bless the house. There are a few things the homeowner can provide such as an icon of Christ and a candle. Also, a list of first names for whom prayers are to be offered, including members of the family and all those living in the house. The list should have a clear distinction between the living and the dead.

Traditions surrounding the blessing differ according to local custom. In general, when the priest comes, all who are present in the house gather around the icon with the candle. Often the family will say the Trisagion Prayers and then help the priest sing of the Troparion of the Feast of Theophany. Then a family member, often the head of the household, leads the priest through the house with the candle. As he goes, the priest sprinkles holy water, and prays for a blessing upon each room and the activity that goes on there. When they have gone through the entire house, the family gathers again around the table and the priest blesses each person present. For a houses which have never been blessed the process is a little more involved, the priest will discuss this with you.

It is a pious custom in many cultures to offer the priest a donation. This donation is never required or even expected.

If you desire to have your house blessed please sign up at Church or you can email or call me to set a date and time. I look forward the opportunity to visit all of your homes.

## January 2015 St. Innocent Orthodox Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9am Divine Liturgy for St. Basil and New Year	2 No Fast	3  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
4  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	5 Strict Fast  Theophany Eve 6pm Great Vespers with the Blessing of the Waters	6  9am Divine Liturgy for Theophany	7 Fish,Wine&Oil  6pm Vespers	8 8am MCMA Meeting 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry  6pm Parish Council Meeting	9	10  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
11  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Orthodoxy 101	12	13	14  6pm Vespers	15  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	16	17  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
18  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Orthodoxy 101	19 <i>ML King Day</i>	20	21  6pm Vespers	22  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	23	24  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
25  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Orthodoxy 101	26	27	28  6pm Vespers	29  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	30 Fish,Wine&Oil	31  10am -6pm Men's Retreat  6pm Readers Vespers

## February 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Publican and Pharisee The Meeting of our Lord 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Orthodoxy 101	2	3  <i>7pm Bolingbroke Community Club</i>	4 Fast Free  6pm Vespers	5  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	6 Fast Free	7  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
8 Prodigal Son  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Orthodoxy 101	9	10  6:30pm Book Club at the Kehayes'	11  6pm Vespers	12 8am MCMA Meeting  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm tentative Parish Council Meeting	13	14 Valentine's Day  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
15 Last Judgment  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Orthodoxy 101	16 <i>Meat Fast</i> Presidents' Day  <i>Fr. Theophan at Pastoral Conference</i>	17 <i>Meat Fast</i>  <i>Fr. Theophan at Pastoral Conference</i>	18 <i>Meat Fast</i>  <i>Fr. Theophan at Pastoral Conference</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	19 <i>Meat Fast</i>  <i>Fr. Theophan at Pastoral Conference</i> 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	20 <i>Meat Fast</i>  <i>Fr. Theophan at Pastoral Conference</i>	21 <i>Meat Fast</i>  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
22 Forgiveness Sunday 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 12pm Forgiveness Vespers followed by Agape	23 Great Lent Begins  6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	24  6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	25  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	26  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry  6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	27  6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos	28 Wine and oil  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers