



ST MARY MAGDALENE

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN
RINCON/SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Scripture Readings

2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Epistle, Sunday Before)

Brethren, you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Mark 1:1-8 (Gospel, Sunday Before)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.'" John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Upcoming Feast: Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace. In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind. The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast. There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany. The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but "to bury human sin by water," to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "the nature of water" and to offer us the form and example of Baptism. On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms. The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.

JANUARY 4TH, 2026

FOREFEAST OF THEOPHANY
SYNTAXIS OF THE SEVENTY

JAN Birthdays, Names Day, & Anniversaries

1st - Andrew Rigato
2nd - Lena Holley
5th - Ally Rigato
6th - Anna Cartwright
7th - Calvin Guyer (Name's Day)
13th - Charlie Boor
17th - Jim Holley
17th - Anthony Ally (Name's Day)
19th - Tahir (Markos) Savasir (Name's Day)
20th - Litsa Osburn
23rd - Matthew Somich
26th - Jesse Edens
28th - Charis Ally (Name's Day)
29th - Dn. Vassily Kocher (Ordination)
29th - Victor Torres
29th - Calvin Guyer
30th - Kamaka Leger

SCHEDULE

January 5th - Monday
Vesperal Liturgy Theophany (6:30 PM)

January 6th - Tuesday
Blessing of Waters (156 E River St, Savannah, GA 31401) (12:00 PM)

January 7th - Wednesday
Wednesday Evening Orthodox Study with Molieben (6:00 PM)

January 8th - Thursday
Coffee Chat at Paddles (401 N Laurel St, Springfield, GA 31329) (10:00 AM)

January 10th - Saturday
St. Gabriel of Georgia Fitness Club (3:45)
Confessions (Before 4:30 PM and After Vespers)
Great Vespers (5:00 PM)
Saturday Night Questing (After Vespers)

January 11th - Sunday
Hours (9:00 AM)
Divine Liturgy (9:30 AM)
Church School (11:45 AM)
Bible Study Class (11:45 AM)
Parish Council (After Coffee Hour)

WISDOM

"Today the waters are sanctified, and the whole creation is enlightened, for Christ is baptized and raises the world with Him." - St. Gregory the Theologian

WEEKLY JOKES

Did you know the fastest ride at Disney World is the Carousel? Its true. It has the most horsepower.

My New Year's resolution for 2026 is to stop living in the past.

THANK YOU, O LORD! IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE!

Monthly Parish Financial Report (As of December 30th, 2025):

"Every good and perfect gift is from above...Your own of Your own, we offer unto You."

January 2026 Goal: **TBA Once the Budget is finalized.**
2025 Year to Date: \$145,625
December 2025 Collections: \$17,537

As we close out 2025, we are grateful for the generosity of our parish family. While we did not fully meet our annual collections goal, the final months of the year were strong, allowing us to end on a positive note and enter 2026 in a solid and stable position. Thank you for your continued faithfulness and support. Full copy of our finances are available here:

<https://savannahorthodox.com/reports/>

Extra Expenses or Kitchen Needs:

Please help support our fellowship hall by donating needed items. We will be sharing a clear list of current needs going forward. If you bring something, please let Fr. Stephen or Suzanne Upchurch know.

2026 Calendars - \$500
Coffee Cups - Donation Needed
Coffee KCups - Donation Needed
Bishop Visit Catering Costs - \$1000

Donate Securely Online:

<https://savannahorthodox.com/help-us-grow/>

The Heartbeat of Parish Life | Greeter Team: Anthony and Chastity

Weekly Church Clean-up (Please sign up): <https://savannahorthodox.com/keeping-our-community-clean/>

Maintenance Items and Projects (Please see Tom before signing up):

<https://savannahorthodox.com/maintenance-and-projects/>

Coffee Hour: <https://savannahorthodox.com/coffee-hour/> or see Mat. Lindsey to sign up.

Kids Church School: Sunday after Coffee Hour. See Jeanie with questions if your child is not enrolled.

Weekly Bible Studies: Classes on Wednesdays (6 PM) and Sundays (11:45 AM). All classes recorded and on all major podcast platforms. Catechumens are encouraged to attend Both Classes.

Coffee Chat: Every THURSDAY - 10 AM Paddles - 401 N Laurel St, Springfield, GA 31329.

Saturday Night Questing (Next Session January 24th): See David Reynolds (Cell: 706-224-2721) to learn more.

St. Gabriel Fitness Club: Join us by the Church Hall every Saturday at 3:45 PM. See Nate Hall (Cell: 912-339-3540) to learn more.

Blessing Holy Water at Vespers Liturgy (January 5th)

We will bless holy water for the year at the end of the Vespers Liturgy on Monday evening. Bring your bottles and contains but if you cannot make it, no worries because we will leave the water in the Baptismal Font for the rest of the month.

Blessing of the Waters - River Street - (January 6th @ 12 PM)

We will celebrate the Feast of Theophany with a Vespers Divine Liturgy the evening before (January 5th at 6 PM), followed by the Blessing of the Waters the next day at 12:00 PM along the Savannah River. We will gather and park at 156 E River St, Savannah, GA 31401, then proceed together for the blessing. After the service, those who wish are invited to stay and go to lunch nearby, with the location decided that day. We hope this public celebration will be a good witness to the Savannah community as we proclaim Christ, who sanctifies the waters and all creation.

House Blessings (Starts January 7th)

House blessings will take place January 7th through February 23th (the beginning of Great Lent). Any household may have their home blessed and this is especially important for catechumens to experience. Sign ups will be available via SignUpGenius: <https://savannahorthodox.com/house-blessing> as well as on a paper sign up sheet in the Narthex, after which I will reach out to schedule a time. I will bring everything needed, but please have a list of the living and departed you would like prayed for prepared. If you would like to share a meal or invite my wife and daughter to join, you are welcome to note that, though it is not required. Also, please do not hesitate to sign up if you feel your home is messy. I understand completely and will never judge anyone for that. I don't mind traveling either. The key is to bless the home so that God can bless and make our lives whole.

Hall and Kitchen Clean Up (January 17th @ 10 AM)

Please join us on January 17 at 10 am to help clean the kitchen and hall as we prepare for Bishop Gerasim's arrival on the 18th.

Bishop Gerasim Visit (January 17th and 18th)

Please add it to your calendars now that Bishop Gerasim will be with us later this month. We will be at St. James' in Beaufort for Vespers as a joint community and he will be with us on Sunday morning for Hierarchal Liturgy.

Parish Annual Meeting (January 25th)

Our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on January 25, and all members of the parish are encouraged to attend, including catechumens, even though voting is limited to Orthodox members in Good Standing. We need to nominate a new warden as Mark Guyer's term will be ending. If you know someone who you'd like to nominate, please speak with me about it.

2026 Pledge Forms - Past Due - Please get them to Fr. Stephen or Ron.

As we prepare this year's budget, please remember that a pledge is not a fixed tithe but a prayerful intention. If circumstances change, give what you can and trust God. If you are later able to give more, glory to God. Our 2026 pledge forms are past due. We have received 26 pledges totaling \$114,555. To reach our parish goal, we still need about \$55,000. If you have not yet submitted your form, please do so this week so we can finalize our planning. You may email it to me: frsteve@savannahorthodox.com. Thank you for your prayerful support.

2026 Church Calendars - Now Available - Free, but \$10 donation recommended.

We ordered 75 Lectionary Wall Calendars at a total cost of \$500. They are free, but a \$10 donation per calendar is appreciated to help cover the cost; checks may be given to Ron Somich with "Calendars 2026" in the memo line.

Latest Parish Reflection: St. Basil the Great, the New Year, and the Meaning of Vasilopita

<https://savannahorthodox.com/st-basil-the-great-the-new-year-and-the-meaning-of-vasilopita/>

PRIEST: Fr. Stephen Osburn 702-521-6988 / frsteve@savannahorthodox.com | DEACON: Dn. Vassily Kocher 912-756-5178

SavannahOrthodox.com | <https://savannahorthodox.com/review/> | Facebook.com/SavannahOrthodoxChurch/ | Instagram.com/SavannahOrthodox

Ask Yourself This Daily:

Have you brought someone **NEW** this month or reached out to someone to come back?

Have you gone to Great Vespers at least once this month?

Are you giving your first offering to God/tithing regularly?

Prayer List

Departed

Nancy, Mark, Edward, Sam, Dorthy, Michael, Panteleimon, Peter, Sarah, Gavin, Child Aspen, Victor, and all children killed through the evil act of abortion.

Living

Clergy: Abp. Melchisedek, Abp. Benjamin, Abp. Nathaniel, Abp. Alexander, Met. Isaiah, Fr. Matthew, Fr. Michael, Dn. Vassily

Community: Mother Cassiana, Tammy, Litsa, child Lilliana, Carl, Olga, Rita, child Ciana Rose, Jamie, Ray, Alexandra, Issac, Sandy, Donald, Cole, Joseph, Catherine Ann, Katherine, Jeff, David, Andrew, Polly, Ann, George, Doug, David, Katie, Kerri, David, Lilly, Haley, Sean, William, Mary Ann, Vicki, Kati, Tonya, Patricia, Tina, James, Bill, Lansen, Helen, Nicholas, Irena, Pina, Andre, child Oliver, Laurie, Akira, Vic, Jodi, Charlee, Owen, Wendy, Kameron, Karen, Melody, Debra, Johanna, Vickie, Kathy, Michael, Alana, infant Kalea, Bobby, Costa, Luke, James, Terry, Robin, Shawn, Debbie, Leigh, Robert, JaLeigh, Johnny, Cindy, David, Sara, Emily, James, Eddie, Linda

Expecting Mothers: Mat. Lindsey, Savannah, Emma, Hailey, Akira

Military and First Responders: Rdr. Alex, Van, Nick, Tyler, Shannon, Landan, Austin, Chad, Vladimir, Andrew, Justin, Mark, Tammy, Nika, Laila, Josh, Kamaka (Olga), Lia

Catechumens: Dusty, Evan, Nicole, Winry, Jeremiah, Dakota, Bridgette, Theodore, Zach, Asher, Audra, Victor, Charlie, Ethan, Nathan, Cullen, Kwasi, Saiah, James, Eliana, Austin, Kasey, Bently, Raelynn, Emma, Oakleigh, Tyler, Joseph, Chastity, Landan, Jesse, Nick, Melissa, Astrid, Freyja, Evan, Caleb, Devin, Kaden, Leo, Tyler, Shannon, Mark, Bronson, Emerson, Halston, Lily, Andrew, Evan, David, Eric, Lia, Wyatt, Renata

Prisoners: Stefan, Daron (Basil), Mark

Orthodox Missions: St. James (Beaufort), St. Basil (Marietta), St. John the Merciful (Kissimmee), St. Anthony (Rock Hill), Holy Resurrection (North Augusta), Annunciation (Jacksonville), St. John the Baptist (Colorado Springs), Ss. Mary and Martha Monastery (Wagner) and all missions and monasteries throughout the Diocese of the South and USA.

And for all of those who are suffering in our community and in the world who are in need of prayers.

Orthodox Did You Know?

In many Orthodox countries, Theophany is celebrated by casting a cross into icy rivers or seas, where the faithful dive into freezing waters to retrieve it as a sign of blessing and courage. Thankfully, here in Savannah we bless the waters without reenacting that tradition, since diving into the Savannah River would be more adventurous than spiritually advisable. We will just throw 3 ice crosses in the River. Join us!