



My Beloved Ones,

As we are still in the beginning of the year, I would like to greet all of you: Clergymen, Laymen, Parish Council Presidents and members, Philoptochos Presidents, and all the faithful with that beautiful phrase, **Happy New Year!** My prayer is that 2018 be a prosperous year, not only as it concerns material things, but mostly with health and spiritual uplifting.

We are very fortunate that on the first of the year our Church celebrates the Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This day, which focuses on an event in the life of our Lord is especially holy, since it demonstrates His obedience to God's Law, and His humility in taking on flesh, all out of love for mankind. It is the further demonstration of His Incarnation, that He became man, so that Man might become more Godly.

Also on the first of the year, we are blessed to observe the feast of Basil the Great, one of the greatest teachers and theologians of our Orthodox Church. As the loving and concerned Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (what is now present-day Turkey), he founded many organizations to benefit those of his congregation who were in need, including the educational system and orphanages.

This coming weekend we are blessed to experience yet another feast, and the conclusion of our "holiday season", which is Theophany. Some refer to this Saturday's feast as Epiphany, but this word has a different meaning. Epiphany refers to a revelation; and while this blessed event was a revelation to those who witnessed Christ's Baptism in the Jordan by St. John, it is more properly explained as Theophany—a revelation of God. When Christ, who was without sin, offered to be baptized, the heavens opened, with the Holy Spirit coming down as a dove, and the voice of the Father encouraging us to love and obey His Son—a revelation of all three persons of the Holy Trinity, the Godhead.

In commemoration of this miraculous appearance in the Jordan, we will bless the water. In our Orthodox faith, whatever we do, whether it is buying a new home, starting a business, or even blessing an item, we use the *agiasmo*, that is, Holy Water. For, as there can be no life without water, when you bless water, you are blessing life.

I hope and pray that you will receive the Holy Water this Theophany, so that your homes, businesses, and all your New Year's endeavors will be blessed. Taking some home with you, you will be able to drink of it, whenever there is a need, blessing your homes and families.

With this, once again, I wish you a Happy New Year, with blessings for peace from Above.

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Metropolitan of Atlanta