



# The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church  
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026**  
Sunday before Epiphany



## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy New Year to all of you and May God bless you and keep you in all your deeds. We are starting the new 2026 with the expectation to be better than the 2025 and to bring peace between all the people around the world. The last few weeks in the church were very busy with plenty of services and the most important a lot of people took part of them and we celebrated the best time of the year. The Nativity According to Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Fr. Pancratios served the liturgy of the New Years Day and the Sunday of the 4<sup>th</sup> of January. We are sending in the history a one year in which our community grows. We had 20 Baptisms and Chrismation and 2 Weddings. Half of this Baptisms are of the Young adults who decided to become part of the Body of Christ and to walk in the difficult path of the Christian life. I wish the mercy of the Lord to be with them now and for ever and to the ages of ages. After restarting The Tower I found one little historical mistake in the first edition. Fr. Pancratios said to me that The Tower has been started in 1985 from Fr. Alban and Fr. Pancratios took over in the 90s. So this little news letter have a history that goes back to the beginning of our community. This is small but important clarification because this news paper is the official recording of our community history. All my respect to both for doing this work for so many years. We have to follow their example for the future.

We will start the New Year again with very busy program in the church. We will have the Services plus some Baptisms and Chrismations of the people who are Cathacumens for few months now and will be accepted in the Body of Christ shortly and on top of this good news we will have Wedding in the Church on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, Sunday after the Divine Liturgy.

Glesni-Magdalene and Luke decided to enter into the Mystery of the Holy Matrimony. All the people are invited to stay after the Liturgy and be part of this beautiful

moment. I would like to say thank you to both for being very helpful in the church and for working hard to become Orthodox Christians.

Thank you also to the Chairman and the Trustees and Church Committee for your good work and warm welcome to the newly elected in the Board. God bless you!

*Fr. John*



## Announcements

- On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January after the Divine Liturgy we will go down to the River Dee to bless the waters. Place is very easy to find, Just type in Google maps, Eccleston Ferry Parking. All Welcome and don't forget the place could be very muddy! Wear good shoes.
- After the blessing of the waters on 6<sup>th</sup> of January we are starting the blessing of the homes. If you like your home to be blessed please contact me or Fr. Pancratios. So we can plan efficiently our travel from place to place. Traditionally we bless the homes in the first days after the feast of Theophany.
- On the Church Bord Meeting we decided to replace the dirty carpet in the church. We are looking to put something that we can easily keep clean. We are looking for floor like in the refectory kitchen. In the alter we will replace the carpet with new one. If you wish to donate to this operation please see me or Theodoros or simply donate to the church.
- Reminder for the car parking in the Cemetery. Please, park your car so the people can pas around you. Avoid stopping in the central part, around the cenotaph.

## Upcoming Services

04 Jan Sunday	10:00 11:00	Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of the Waters	Sunday before Epiphany
05 Jan Monday	18:00	Vesperal Liturgy	Feast of Theophany
06 Jan Tuesday	09:00 10:00 12:00	Matins Divine Liturgy Blessing of the River Dee	Theophany of Christ River Dee, Eccleston
07 Jan Wednesday	18:30 19:15	Vespers Catechesis	
10 Jan Saturday	17:30	Great Vespers	
11 Jan Sunday	10:00 11:00	Matins Divine Liturgy	



**Camp St Sophrony & Camp St Bega**  
Archdiocese of Thyateira and GB Youth Ministries  
Pre-registration now open!!!



We are delighted to announce that, with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas, Camp Saint Sophrony will be taking place this year from Saturday 26 July to Friday 1 August, and Camp Saint Bega will be taking place this year from Monday 4 August to Friday 8 August.

Both Camp Saint Sophrony and Camp Saint Bega are part of the Archdiocese children and youth Ministries. Camp Saint Sophrony is served by Father Panteleimon Maxfield as priest in charge and Camp Saint Bega is served by Father Antonios Kakalis as priest in charge.

Pre-registration for the camps is now open via the Archdiocese website at the following link: <https://thyateirayouthcamps.org.uk/>

Direct all parents with children aged 8-18, in school years 4-13, to pre-register via the website as soon as possible as places are limited. Applications are open from 3rd March. Keep an eye on your emails after you register.

Volunteers can register their interest here: <https://thyateirayouthcamps.org.uk/>

## A story from our Community

At the beginning of January we celebrate the Feast of Theophany of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is one of the biggest feasts during the Liturgical Year.

What does it really mean Theophany or Epiphany. This Feast has very deep theological meaning. With simple word Theophany means Revelation of God. This is the time when God reveal Himself to the mankind as Trinity. When Jesus submitted Himself to be baptized by John, the heavens opened and the Father spoke, saying, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." (Lk. 3:22) At the same time, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in the likeness of a dove and rested upon Jesus. Never before, in such a clear way had the three Persons of the Holy Trinity been manifested to the world at one time. This act is very beautifully depicted in the hymnography of the orthodox church "When You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world." We are no longer alone, God came between us, so we can become like him. We all know the name attributed to Christ, Emanuel which means "God is with us!". In the Orthodox Christianity our religious experience isn't simply "supernatural" feeling or emotionalism. It is completely real, as it is said in the theological language "God enters into the human affairs. Christ came into the world for all these vain things, so that they wouldn't be vain any longer, but immortal".

This is the reason why we bless the water and our homes on Theophany. We sanctify and bring God grace in our homes at that time. The waters are not simply a symbolic expression or metaphor it is the reality that give every human opportunity to taste the joy of the Glory of God, opportunity for all of us to fill our lives with the life of God. It is all not simply symbolism but absolutely real.

Once I have read a very good observation about Orthodoxy from person who is completely foreign to the Orthodoxy. He said "The Orthodox Christianity isn't religion, it is Church..." He said all this as negative observation, to prove the modern evangelical idea that God is "supernatural" thing or "superbeing" that can do everything for us. Some kind of magician.

In the Orthodox church our experience of God is connected with the liturgical life of the Church. We experience and taste God real in the Divine Liturgy. It is the same in the Blessing of the Waters on the Feast of Theophany. We are touched by Him through the sprinkling and testing the Holy Water on this Feast.

There are many traditions on this day in the Orthodoxy but the most beautiful is the Blessing of the Rivers (Sea, Lake etc.) After the blessing the priest leave the Cross in the river and the people jump in the river to take the Cross. In my home town in Bulgaria on the Feast of Theophany the priest bless the waters of the Danube River. The River is wide one mile across and the people are out to participate this glorious event. There are a lot of people who jump for the Cross in the River as well. The weather in January in Bulgaria could be very cold.



In this random picture from my home town in Bulgaria, you can see the Danube river completely frozen. It happens few times in 20 century. I still remember once in early 1990 on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January for the Theophany the temperatures dropped to -28°C. The big towing boat from the port made a space in the frozen river, so the priest could bless the waters. There were three people who jumped in icy river after the cross. I was there as well. It was so cold that the water in the little baptistery that the priest bless in the church yard nearly frozen until he finished the Service. I still remember that it was so cold that my eye lashes frozen just for 20 minutes outside and the nose start bleeding from the very cold weather. After the Service in the church we had procession to the river and there the priest sprinkle everyone with water... Well he try to, but it was ice drops.... But nothing can stop us.

The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: [www.thyateira.org.uk](http://www.thyateira.org.uk).

## ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

*Β΄ Τιμ. δ΄, 5-8*

Τέκνον Τιμόθεε, νῆφε ἐν πάσιν, κακοπάθησον, ἔργον ποιήσον εὐαγγελιστοῦ, τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον. Ἐγὼ γάρ ἤδη σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς ἀναλύσεως ἐφέστηκεν. Τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν ἠγωνίσαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα· λοιπόν, ἀπόκειται μοι ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος, ὃν ἀποδώσει μοι ὁ Κύριος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ὁ δίκαιος κριτῆς· οὐ μόνον δέ ἐμοί, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσιν τοῖς ἠγαπηκόσιν τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ.

## EPISTLE READING

*2 Tim. 4: 5-8*

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

## PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who did patiently endure the scourging and wounding of Your most holy Body, that You might save the souls and bodies of Your people, look graciously, we beseech You, upon the suffering body of this Your servant (name) and give him / her strength to endure patiently whatsoever You shall see fit to lay upon him / her. Bless the means employed for the working out of his / her cure, granting that he / she may so endure his / her sufferings in the flesh that the wounding of his / her body may be to avail for the correcting and salvation of his / her soul, for Yours it is to show mercy and to save, O Christ our God; and to You do we send up Glory, as to Your Eternal Father and Your All-Holy, Good and Life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

## ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

*Ἦχος πλ. α΄*

Τὸν συνάναρχον Λόγον Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι, τὸν ἐκ Παρθένου τεχθέντα εἰς σωτηρίαν ἡμῶν, ἀνυμνήσωμεν, πιστοὶ καὶ προσκυνήσωμεν· ὅτι ἠυδόκησε, σαρκὶ ἀνελθεῖν ἐν τῷ σαυρωῷ, καὶ θάνατον ὑπομεῖναι, καὶ ἐγείραι τοὺς τεθνεώτας, ἐν τῇ ἐνδόξῳ Ἀναστάσει αὐτοῦ.

## RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

*Plagal of the 1st Mode*

Let us believers praise and let us worship the Word, who like the Father and the Spirit is without beginning, born from a Virgin for our Salvation; for he was well pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and undergo death, and to raise those who had died, by his glorious Resurrection.

## ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Μάρκ. α', 1-8

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,  
Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὡς γέγραπται ἐν τοῖς  
προφήταις, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν  
ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς  
κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν  
σου· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ,  
ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου, εὐθείας  
ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ, ἐγένετο  
Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ  
κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν  
ἁμαρτιῶν. Καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν  
πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ  
Ἱεροσολυμίται, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο πάντες ἐν  
τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ  
ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. Ἦν  
δὲ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας  
καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν  
ὄσφυν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐσθίων ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι  
ἄγριον. Καὶ ἐκήρυσσε λέγων· ἔρχεται ὁ  
ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμι  
ἱκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν  
ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· ἐγὼ μὲν ἐβάπτισα  
ὑμᾶς ἐν ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν  
Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ.



## GOSPEL READING

Mark 1: 1-8

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 shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.



## SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is taken from the very beginning of St Mark's Gospel. The very first words tell us what it is about: 'The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. And the very first word Ἀρχή (Arche) is intended to remind us of the beginning of the Book of Genesis, the start of the Bible (Genesis 1:1) Ἐν Ἀρχῇ: 'In the Beginning...'. (Note that St John uses the same words at the beginning of his Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word').

St Mark's Gospel is the shortest, the easiest to read in Greek and it has a wonderful sense of immediate urgency and this is present right from the very beginning. The story starts with the one who is to prepare the way. There are a few details, but enough for us to know who John the Baptist is, the prophet Elias returned. The prophecy tells that Elias (Elijah) will return as forerunner of the Christ. It will be recalled that Elias was taken up into heaven in a chariot – he did not die. The description of his dress and what he eats are there to remind us of this.

Jesus appears equally suddenly, He is baptised and we are faced at once with the Holy Trinity: the voice of the Father, the baptism of the Son and the Holy Spirit descending as a dove.

However notice verse 10. 'Immediately coming out of the water he saw the heavens torn open and the Spirit descending on Him as a dove.' The word translated here as 'torn open' is σχιζομε- νους, (schizomenous) a word meaning 'split apart' or 'torn apart' and it is the origin of the English word 'Schism'. St Mark does not use this word lightly and the dynamic of what he says is somewhat lost in translation. This is a really dynamic word, something tremendous has happened. Almighty God himself has appeared with us.

St Mark uses this word again at the end of his gospel (Mark 15:38) 'And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom'. Another dynamic event: the curtain behind which God was believed to dwell has been torn apart. The death of Christ on the Cross has changed everything, God is now present with us. St Matthew uses the word at this point in his account of the passion story to recount how the rocks are torn apart and some of the dead rise (Matt. 27:51b).

This dramatic "tearing apart" is to be found in good icons of the Anastasis. The rocks above Christ head have been torn apart leaving a hole. The Saviour has crashed through them, the gates of Hades are thrown down, and His garments are flying upwards as He suddenly grabs Adam and Eve (and thus all mankind) wrenching them out of Hades to live in eternity with him.

In the services of Theophany and especially the service of the Great Blessing of the Water there is frequent use of the word "Today". Yes, Today these things have happened! God does not have a history, a past or a future. He is perpetually NOW. Today these things have happened! Today He has been baptised in the waters of Jordan! Today he has transformed the Water! Today he has died on the Cross! Today He has Risen from the Dead! Today we are with Him in Eternity! Today His love for us is seen as beyond anything we can begin to imagine! Yes Today! Glory to God! Amen!

*Protopresbyter Stephen Maxfield*



## Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)

COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

To learn more visit: [www.coty.org.uk](http://www.coty.org.uk).

Instagram: [COTY\\_org](https://www.instagram.com/COTY_org)



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## Explanation of the Icon

The symbolism of this icon is deep and rich. There is one particular part I want to focus on for this blog entry.

Jesus is naked, or nearly so. Christ is purposely depicted with little or no clothing. But why is that significant?

All throughout the creation narrative in Genesis we see God creating and then saying it is “good.” Man and woman were created together in God’s image. They were both beautiful, and while they lacked physical garments, they were clothed in the glory of the “image” and “likeness” of God. However, when they fell into sin, they hid in shame until God brought them garments of skin to wear (which symbolizes the sinful tendency that now obscures our true nature). Their natural beauty was transformed into an object of shame. Adam and Eve fell, and with them fell creation.

Now, enter Jesus Christ: he represents the second Adam (1 Cor 15). In shame and nakedness, Adam hid. Yet Christ comes in his majesty, both as God and man, both in glory and nakedness completely unashamed, representing the beauty of the undefiled human made, possible through Him (and in the subsequent centuries Christians were often baptized without any clothing, shedding the garments of the “old man” to die in Christ and be resurrected in Him). But why was Christ baptized if He had no sin?

While Christ was baptized in the Jordan River, it was really the Jordan and all of creation that was baptized in Christ. As Canticle Four of Compline of Theophany states, At Thine appearing in the body, the earth was sanctified, the waters blessed, the heaven enlightened, and mankind was set loose from the bitter tyranny of the enemy.

We see the beginning of a new creation in Theophany. Things are being set right. Christ has come not only to cleanse and restore mankind, but to adopt us as heirs into his Kingdom. And when we receive His glory, not only are we redeemed, but we draw all of creation with us into the final restoration. That is why “creation groans” in eager expectation, awaiting the glorification of the children of God. (Rom. 8)



## Synaxarion

### The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ



On January 6 in the Holy Orthodox Church we celebrate the Holy Theophany, or Epiphany, of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ.

When our Lord reached thirty years from His physical birth, He began His teaching and saving work. He Himself signified this “beginning of the beginning” by His baptism in the River Jordan. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, “The beginning of the world: water; the beginning of the Good News: Jordan.” At the time of the baptism of the Lord in water, the Father was revealed to the sense of hearing; the Spirit was revealed to the sense of sight, and in addition to these, the Son was revealed to the sense of touch. The Father uttered His witness about the Son, the Son was baptized in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovered above the water. John the Baptist witnessed and said about Christ, “Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world.” When John immersed and baptized the Lord in the

Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation were shown. That is to say: The Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them (immersion) and became alive again (the coming out of the water); and we must die as the old sinful man and become alive again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation. The Feast of the Epiphany (Theophany in Greek) is also called the Feast of Illumination. For us, the event in the River Jordan illuminates, by manifesting to us God as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. Also, every one of us through baptism in water is illumined by this, that we become adopted by the Father of Lights through the merits of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Unto Christ be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen



### Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. Remember that all our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including of the building and all the bills.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance if the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sing it. Thank you for your support !



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