

A. Menaion

**O Master of all created things,
You have established seasons and years by your power.
Bless this New Year with Your bounty:
Preserve this land and its people in peace,
And save us through the prayers of the Theotokos.**

(Molieben hymn for New Year's, Troparion, tone 2, at "Now and ever")

January

Prosinets - Old Slavonic. *Sichen* -- Little Russian (1)

January 1

Ie. New Year. At the present time we celebrate January 1 as the beginning of the new year. Forty five years before the Nativity of Christ the Romans celebrated the New Year on January 1 instead of March 1, as they had before, and spent this day in licentious noisy games in disguises, in mad entertainment and abominable dissolution (2); therefore Christians for a long time did not dedicate this day as the New Year, and their days of the New Year looking at the different countries and times were: March 1, March 25, September 1, September 23 and December 25. In 1594 French King Charles IX established that the year begins on January 1; eventually other western countries accepted this establishment. At first Russia began the year on March 1 (see March 1), and then later on September 1 (see September 1). At the end of 1699 Emperor Peter 1 issued a decree to begin the civil year on January 1, and 1700 was the first year, which began with this month. (See below in the paschalia for the details about chronology).

Notes:

(1) The name *January* is given this month because it was dedicated to Janus by ancient Romans, represented by two faces - in front (young) and behind (old) - meaning that he stands between two times: his one face looks forward, and the other looks back at the year just expired. *Prosinets* refers to the shining light, which strengthens from that moment by the light of the sun, which begins to show the blue sky. This month is called *Sichen* from

the crackling of severe frost or from the dissection, according to the belief of the people, of winter into two halves.

(2) According to the belief of the Roman pagans, the first moment of the New Year had a fatal influence on the entire annual period of time: whoever cheerfully meets and greets the first day of the New Year will live cheerfully during the entire year; therefore everyone made an effort to meet and to greet the first day of the New Year as cheerfully and loosely as possible. On New Year's Eve men and women gathered in private homes and in inns so that as a community they would meet the New Year. To be drunk on this day was regarded as necessary even by those who did not like to drink wine. Noise, shouts, songs, dancing, applause resounded on the streets and in the buildings all night. The men dressed themselves as women, and in turn the women did not lag behind the men in the art of masquerading. According to the testimony of the Blessed Augustine, some dressed up as animals, put on rams skins, attached to themselves heads of cows, deer, hounds and other animals; others dressed up even as demons or put on themselves images of the pagan gods and goddesses. The masqueraders went through the city, from house to house, with noise, song and dance. Various kinds of magicians, soothsayers and augurs, and fortune tellers of all possibilities about the future never had as many visitors as on this night, the eve of the New Year. With approach of morning all hastened to each other with congratulations, well wishing and gifts for the New Year. The eve of the day was spent in feasts and amusements.

On this day after the Liturgy, a molieben with kneeling prayers is sung (1). Epistle: 1 Tim. 2:1-6; sel. 282. **Gospel:** Luke 4: 16-22; sel. 13.

We receive the New Year as everyone knows, especially in the large cities, with noisy festivity, amid all possible kinds of sinful amusements and diversions (2). In view of this it is rather pleasant to note the custom, which has appeared only in recent times, to perform, with the sanction of local diocesan authority, a **molieben in the temples at midnight for the New Year** (3) (see for 1894 Diocesan News (Eparkhial'nyiia vedomosti), for example Astrakhan No. 5, Kholm -Warsaw No. 2, Penza No. 1). It is true that the Molieben is performed everywhere on January 1 after the liturgy, and where the New Year peacefully reposes, as for example in the villages (3), there is no present need to perform the Molieben at midnight. But there, where at midnight of the New Year debauchery reigns, it is rather beneficial at this particular time to call for a prayer for those meeting in the sinful watchfulness of the New Year. One must agree with the opinion of some,

that in performing the Molieben at midnight for the New Year pastoral practice has found a faithful and most reliable means for counteracting the sinful meeting of the New Year. Many are involved in the debauchery of the New Year owing to their weakness and levity and it is especially necessary to stretch a helping hand to them. Contrasting with the dirty and noisy outbursts of worldly indecency for the New Year, solemn appeals of church bells, surely their mighty sounds will victoriously resound in many hearts, will stop, defend and show much of the present way as the way one should meet the New Year (5).

Notes:

(1) Up to 1700, when the New Year was celebrated on September 1, "the action of the New Year" was made special (see September 1). Emperor Peter 1 canceled this "action" in 1700, and then the molieben by Gabriel Buzhinsky was written and used till today.

(2) The accusations and instructions of St. J. Chrysostom are involuntarily remembered in his sermon for the New Year: "The diabolical revelry, he says, continuing today in the all night, laughter, malicious gossip, nightly dancing and ridiculous burlesque has taken our city in captivity...The games concerned me most of all, occurring in the inns today, fulfilling intemperance and great impiety; -- an impiety that occupies them on these days observing, guessing and thinking that if on the first day of this month they spend in pleasure and gladness, then the rest of the year will be spent that way also; - but the intemperance that at dawn women and men having filled their glasses and cups with wine, drink without any limit...If you want to benefit from the first day of this month, act in such a way: that when you see the end of year, it will praise the Master that He entered into you such a cycle of years, a broken heart, numbering the years of your life, telling yourself: the days flow and pass, the years terminate...,and what good have we done?...Remember this philosophy at the beginning of months during the cycle of years... To observe on these days - not only the work of Christian philosophy, but also the errors of paganism"...Really, it is strange and inexcusable for the Christian to expect special benefits from how he meets the New Year, forgetting that true happiness and well-being depend not on the cycle of time, but on the will of God and from the character of our activity; it is inexcusable to approach New Year with noisy carousing from evening to midnight, to do only purely pagan things and for the truly Christian dishonor...Meeting similar days, as on the New Year's, with various profligacies and disgraces not only testifies to absence of piety, but also sustains antagonism to Christianity and the church...

(3) The initiative of such a meeting of the New Year was made about two or three years ago by some pastors in St. Petersburg. - In 1894 in almost all the churches in St. Petersburg the molieben for the New Year prescribed for after the liturgy was performed on the eve after the Vigil, which then set the tone for the religious mood for the entire night for all those present at the divine services (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1894, 1). In the same year in Armavir (Stavropol Diocese) the Vigil for the New Year was usually performed later, beginning at 10 p.m., and before the reading of the Gospel the Akathist to the Sweetest Lord Jesus was read in the middle of the temple, and at the end of the Vigil appropriate instruction was given (Tserkovniya Vedomosti (Church News) 1894, 3).

(4) Unfortunately, even in our villages, as a heritage of old paganism, various superstitious customs, omens and fortune telling associated with the New Year still continue to exist. In many places in Little Russia the hostess prepares for the evening on the day before New Year as many pirogi and knishes as possible and puts them in one common heap on the table. The host after a prayer sits on his redemption place, behind a pile of pirogi; the children enter, pray and ask the mother: "where is our father?" - "He-he didn't you see me?" asks the father. - "No we didn't see you, dad!" the children answer. "Grant, O God, that even during this year they will not see!" says the father, that is, so that even the next year there will be the same abundance of loaves. The evening on the day before the New Year is known in Little Russia by the name "bountiful" and "rich", with the idea that the approach of the New Year represents the rebirth of the sun, while the summer and the harvest do not exist by themselves. On New Year's, brought out into the garden from the hut is the rubbish, which from the Nativity itself was not thrown out onto the courtyard, but was swept away into the corner under "redemption". In the garden this rubbish is burned so that the smoke from it made it possible "to fumigate" all the fruit trees. By doing this the peasants think the trees will be more fruitful. Early in the morning children visit homes and sow seeds of oats, rice, and so forth, singing so-called sowing time songs or pronouncing wishes for happiness and fertility for the next year. At the showering of the girls the unmarried boys by throwing on them seeds foretell: if the number of grains will appear even, it means the girl will marry, and if not to the contrary. The owners carefully collect the seeds which were strewn and hold them for planting, and then with other seeds throw them on the ground; a part of them they also give to the hens that laid more eggs. The act of showering with the seeds is called: *assenem*, *ovsenem* (with oats), *hovsenem*, *badtsenev* and so on. All these words come from the word *oves* (oats), used during the sowing, which, probably, are the

remnants of some forgotten pagan village-owner feast. The same feast also prescribes the custom of preparing kasha on this day with special activity and with prognostications on it for the next year. A different kind fortune telling still continues its hold on the simple people even in Great Russia. In Byelorussia, as soon as it gets dark, a little boy, a girl and even young ones are sent to the neighbors to perform "a theft", that is, to take from each other anything, that one can take in hand: clothes, utensils and so forth. The little boy makes an effort to steal anything from the wardrobe of a girl, and they in turn do the same. All stolen items come back the next day. In accordance with this everyone makes an effort to boast cleverly and usefully about the theft of an item. There are, however, situations where the "theft" as a joke turns out to be in reality an adult...

(5) The Holy Church in its prayer books prescribes the singing of the molieben on the New Year, encompassing all existing needs from the temporary to the eternal in human life, thanking the Creator and Providence for all the blessings abundantly poured out upon us by Him during the past year and asking Him "to bless the crown of the coming year with Thy bounty". Together with these the Holy Church stands us before the face of God, as the Source of life and immortality and the Originator of all good, and calls us to implore Him: "to forgive us and all Thy people all the sins voluntary and involuntary, we have committed during the past year", "to drive away from us all soul corrupting passions and corrupt habits", "to renew a right spirit in our hearts", "to create in us zeal for good works and obedience to all His commandments", "to grant us peace, perseverance, sincere love, orderly structure and a virtuous way of life". Therefore this very thing induces us, at the approach of the New Year, to strictly examine and review all our life and works during the past year, sincerely repenting our sins and making a firm resolution for the future, with full effort, to abstain from all evil, and to learn that the well-being of our life depends on God and that our only duty is "zeal for good works", that is, being truly Christian. Only a true Christian may enjoy a pure, tranquil conscience - the most precious of all treasures; only he may, with a firm hope in God, transfer all difficulties and temptations, which are so numerous in life and inevitable for everyone; only he can rightly take advantage for the good of the world for the glory of God, for the salvation of his soul and for the welfare of his neighbor; only he can be satisfied with any destiny the Lord sends him; and that in this satisfaction is the true happiness on earth. It is this happiness that we also should wish, at the approach of the New Year, for our neighbor and ourselves and for this we should lift up fervent prayers to the Most High.

The Circumcision in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ

Circumcision was established by God in the Old Testament as a sign of the covenant of God with Abraham and his posterity. The Lord Jesus Christ on the eighth day after His Nativity was obliged to undergo, in the accordance with the law, the rite of circumcision (Gen 17:14; Lev. 12:2-3) with the assigning to him the name of Jesus (Luke 2:21; 1:31). The Old Testament circumcision in the New Testament has conceded its place to the sacrament of baptism, of which it was a prototype (Col. 2:11-12). In the East evidence for the celebration of the Circumcision of the Lord arises in the fourth century. Stephen the Sabbaite wrote the Canon for the Circumcision in the seventh century. Commemorated on this feast together with the Circumcision in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and the naming Him Jesus the Holy Church sings: "Today the Master, circumcised in the flesh, is called Jesus"; "on the eighth day the Master was circumcised as a Child: He received the name Jesus for He is the Savior and Lord of the world". But inviting their incense "in sanctity" to celebrate "the naming of the glorious Master Christ": "for today the one pleasing to God is called Jesus", - the Holy Church mainly hymns "the circumcision in the flesh of the incarnate God the Word". By celebrating the circumcision of the Savior and His naming the Holy Church confirms our faith in that unchangeable truth that He is the God-man, "and yes not as the heretics say that he became incarnate as an illusion, but he truly has flesh and was not opposed to the law, but its fulfiller". Together with this example of the Savior, Who, "did not disdain circumcision of His flesh", "today of His own will was circumcised in the flesh", and, "the law fulfilling the law of the Creator", "gave to His own Self an image and a plan for the salvation of all", the Holy Church teaches us to be constantly obedient and submissive to the laws for our own good and for a Christian example to others. The circumcision which the Lord accepted as a sign of the covenant of God with man, and the name as a seal of His Service for the salvation of the world (Mt. 1:21; Mark 16:17; 9:38-39; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6,16; 19:13; Phil. 2:9-10), inspire us, that as we enter into the New Covenant with God we should be circumcised "with a circumcision made without hands, by cutting off the body of sinful flesh, in the circumcision of Christ (Col. 2:11). Our Christian name must not be a dead sound, but the living testimony that we are devoted to the service of God and we are in a beneficial union in Him for His glory and our eternal salvation and blessedness.

Troparion, tone 1

**Enthroned on high with the eternal Father
And your Divine Spirit,
You willed to be born on earth, O Jesus,
From the unwedded handmaid, Your Mother.
Therefore you were circumcised as an eight-day child.
Glory to Your most gracious counsel.
Glory to Your dispensation. //
Glory to Your condescension, only Lover of Mankind.**
(Text tr., Holy Myrrh-bearing Women Monastery)

Kontakion, (feast and St. Basil), tone 3

**The Lord of all accepts to be circumcised.
Thus in His mercy He circumcises the sins of mortal men.
Today He grants the world salvation,
While Basil, high priest of God our Creator, //
Rejoices in Heaven as the radiant star of Christ.**
(Text tr., Holy Myrrh-bearing Women Monastery)

In the 1742 Horologion, published in the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, is the following Magnification for the feast of the Circumcision of the Lord: **We magnify You, the Lifegiver Christ, and we honor the most pure flesh of Your lawful circumcision.** According to the Ustav (Rubrics) for January 1 we must sing the Magnification for St. Basil the Great.

The feast of the Circumcision of the Lord although it belongs to the great feasts and has the festive sign does not belong to the Twelve Major Feasts and is celebrated on one day, without a forefeast and an afterfeast. For Matins and the Liturgy see below on page 6.

*The Memory of our Father among the Saints, Basil the Great, Archbishop of
Caesarea in Cappadocia*

St. Basil the Great was born in 329 in Caesarea, Cappadocia from god-fearing and noble Christian parents. The child's first education was received from his god-fearing grandmother Macrina, and his first instruction in the rules of eloquent speech was from his father in Neocaesarea. Reaching a youthful age, St. Basil traveled to the then prominent cities to complete his education. In Athens he met Gregory the Theologian and submitted himself

to him and for the rest of his life remained his faithful friend. Here he studied grammar, rhetoric, astrology, mathematics, philosophy and medicine, and has attained the most brilliant success in these subjects. Having a brilliant mind and wisdom, St. Basil at the same time distinguished himself with good moral behavior, humility and a pure way of life. Having returned to Caesarea, St. Basil often fulfilled the duties of a lawyer. Then, having accepted baptism, together with the rank of Reader, he became interested in monasticism, and went to study monastic life in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Returning from his travels, he settled in a hermitage near Neocaesarea, devoting himself to the ascetical efforts of fasting and prayer. Together with this, seeking true knowledge and striving for divine wisdom, he was engaged in the study of Holy Scriptures, and compared translations of them, and also studied the works of Origen. When danger threatened the faith, St. Basil left the hermitage and was revealed as a most fervent fighter for Orthodoxy. In 364 he was ordained a presbyter in the church in Caesarea. Now his zeal never knew weariness: he devoted all of himself for service to the Lord and indefatigably taught the congregation, sometimes preaching twice a day, in the morning and evening, and sometimes after the sermon in one church he went to preach in another. The sermon blossomed so wonderfully in the mouth of St. Basil, that he sometimes postponed teaching until the next day. Caring for the spiritual needs of his parish, St. Basil also did not disregard the physical. During a famine the inhabitants of Caesarea have found him a generous benefactor. In 370 St. Basil was installed as the Bishop of Caesarea and in this rank, and not abandoning his ascetical paradigm of life, he fervently cared for his clergy from the first server at the altar to the last, all becoming wiser, and demanding from all strict virtue. St. Basil himself loved the beauty of the church, the elegance of the temple, harmony in worship, and this feeling inspired those around him. His very appearance: his bearing, the pale determined face, deep eyes, his calm body language of importance raised a feeling of piety in everyone. By word and purity of life that fervently edifies all his flock in faith and piety, he was "the father of orphans, protector of widows, and wealth for the poor, consolation of the ill, and guide of the wealthy, a staff for the old", "and a teacher of virtue for the youth who lived the monastic life". With burning Christian love for his neighbors, St. Basil built shelters, alms-houses, and hospitable hospices. Courageous and devoted, he was always ready for any work and deprivation for the sake of the welfare of neighbors. St. Basil was not concerned about any danger for his own life, for he not only visited, but also embraced lepers, thus giving them great joy to feel the intimacy of his devoted love for them. As a wise defender of Orthodoxy, St. Basil "with

strong divine words you brought down heresies" and "with sermons you poured out teachings to the god-fearing world". Humble and meek, condescending and merciful to sinners with infirmities, but unshakable in faith and ready to endure all for the truth of Christ, St. Basil was a strict chastiser of the evil adversaries of faith and more than anything cared about the purity of Orthodoxy not only in Caesarea but also in the entire Eastern Church. "He, in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, neither slept nor dozed and because of his efforts he exhausted the rest of his body, yet up to now he did not find the cure for evil". And only due to his efforts the church in Caesarea was saved from Arianism. St. Basil died in 379 at the age of 50. From his service in the Church and his unusual high moral and selfless life St. Basil is named "the great" and is glorified as the "glory and beauty of the Church", "star and eye of the universe", "teacher of dogma", "chamber of learning", "leader of life ". The following works of St. Basil have reached us: nine discourses on The Six Days, thirteen discourses on the Psalms, twenty five discourses on various events, five books Against the Arians and one On the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, rules for church deans, a typikon for monastics, prayers and the Liturgy known by his name. The Crusaders transferred the body of St. Basil the Great, according to western writers, to Flanders; his honorable head, according to Right Reverend Porphyrius, is in the Athonite Laura of St. Athanasius; his arm is kept in Venice (1).

Notes:

(1) In some places on St. Basil's Day they visit homes to gather pirogi, pig's feet and others Christmas holiday pork provisions. Pork is the main treat at this time and St. Basil is considered by the people to be the patron of pigs. Shepherds deeply honor St. Basil but they are afraid to displease him. In the Orel Province at the New Year they prepare roast pig and call it *kasaretskim*, from the name of St. Basil of Caesarea. The expression used by the people: "to be employed on St. Basil's Day" means that this day is considered as an item in the village-owner chronology.

Troparion, tone 1

**Your proclamation has gone out into all the earth
Which was divinely taught by hearing your voice
Expounding the nature of creatures,
Ennobling the manners of men.
Holy Father of a royal priesthood, //
Entreat Christ God that our souls may be saved.**

(Text tr. Holy Myrrh-bearing Women Monastery)

Kontakion, tone 4

**You were revealed as the sure foundation of the Church,
Granting all a lordship which cannot be taken away, //
Sealing it with your precepts, Venerable and Heavenly Father.**

(Text tr. Holy Myrrh-bearing Women Monastery)

In the 1742 Horologion published by the Kiev Monastery of the Caves is the following Magnification: **We magnify you, Hierarch of Christ Basil, pious protector of the undefiled Church of Christ.** Today we usually sing the General Magnification for a Hierarch.

On January 1 we always serve the Liturgy of St. Basil and instead of "It is Truly Meet" we sing "All Creation Rejoices". At Matins: the Polyeleos, the Magnification and the Gospel is the General to a Hierarch, at the 9th Ode we do not sing the "More Honorable", but we sing the refrains of the Feast and of St. Basil"; the Dismissal for all services are special for the Circumcision (see the Priest's Service Book). But at Matins, if January 1 falls on a Sunday, the Resurrection Gospel is read and at the 9th Ode we sing "More Honorable" and do not sing the refrains of the Feast and of the Saint"; if January 1 falls on a Tuesday, we also read the Resurrection Gospel (1).

At the Liturgy: if January 1 falls on a Sunday or Monday, the Prokeimenon is for the Sunday before Theophany and the Saint, the Epistle and Gospel is for the Sunday before Theophany and for the Feast, the Alleluia is for the Sunday before Theophany; if January 1 falls on Tuesday, the Prokeimenon, the Epistle, the Alleluia and the Gospel "first do the Sunday before Theophany and then do the Circumcision and St. Basil as one"; if January 1 falls on Saturday, then the Epistle and Gospel is "first for the Circumcision and then for the Saturday before Theophany" (Ustav (Rubrics) January 1 and December 26).

***Markovu glavu v Ustave i mineye* (see the chapters in the Ustav and Menaion) If the Circumcision of the Lord and St. Basil the Great falls on a Sunday.**

Notes:

(1) It does not at all break the order ("column") of the Resurrection Matins Gospel: if January 1 falls on Tuesday, the next Resurrection day will of necessity be January 6, when the special festal Gospel is read; the regular Resurrection Gospel, falling on January 6, will be read on January 1, if this date falls on Tuesday.

Paramoia: 1) Gen. 17:1-2, 4-7, 3, 9-12, 14; 2) Proverbs 8:22-30 (Feast); 3) Proverbs 10:31-32, 11:1-2,4, 3, 5-12 (Saint). **Matins Gospel:** John 10:9-16; sel. 36 (Saint). **Epistle:** Col. 2:8-12; sel. 254 (Feast); Hebrews 7:26-28, 8:1-2; sel. 318 (Saint). **Gospel:** Luke 2:20-21, 40-52; sel 6 (Feast); Luke 6:17-28; sel. 24 (Saint)

Saturday before Theophany (between the dates of December 26 and January 5) **Epistle:** 1 Tim. 3:14-16, 4:1-5; sel. 284. **Gospel:** Mt. 3:1-11, sel. 5. **Sunday before Theophany** (will occur between the same dates as for the Saturday before Theophany) **Epistle:** 2 Tim. 4:5-8; sel. 298. **Gospel:** Mark 1:1-8; sel. 1.

Note that from January 1 to 14 the Katavasia is "The Lord mighty in battle uncovered the foundations of the deep."

Note that from January 1 to 6 we continue to eat meat, except for January 5.

Martyr Basil of Ancyra

He suffered for his firm confession of faith in Christ about the year 362. After various severe tortures in Ancyra and Constantinople, he was torn apart by lions in Caesarea.

Martyr Theodotus was beheaded for his confession of the Christian faith.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzus. The father of St. Gregory the Theologian died in peace in 374, a one hundred year old man.

Ven. Theodosius, abbot of Triglia died in peace (Triglia today is a village near Constantinople on the Gulf of *Kiis*).

New Martyr Peter of the Peloponnese was hanged in 1776 in Timisi (Tuzla) in Asia Minor.

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