



## **CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD + ST. BASIL THE GREAT**

**January 1**

### **THE HYMN**

**Apolytikion of the Feast, January 1**

*In essence being God, most-compassionate Master, You assumed human nature without transmutation. Fulfilling the Law, of Your own will You accepted circumcision in the flesh, to bring an end to the shadow, and to remove the passions that cover us. Glory to Your benevolence, O Lord; glory to Your compassion; glory to Your inexpressible condescension, O Word.*

### **THE SERMON**

**Putting On The Grace of Renewal**

Our Church, on January 1st, celebrates a special occasion from the life of Christ: His Circumcision on the eighth day after the Nativity. We also honor the distinguished Father of our Church, Saint Basil the Great. Circumcision was a Jewish religious ritual that took place on the eighth day after the birth of a male infant. During the ritual, the child was also given a name. Circumcision was something that God Himself commanded Abraham to implement as a testimony of the Covenant between them. During His Circumcision on the eighth day, Christ accepts His Name according to Jewish Law. His Name is "Jesus," which means savior. The Savior Christ came to bring redemption, salvation, justice, and freedom. He came to establish a communion of love between us and God, and within humanity as well.



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Jesus Christ, as a genuine descendant of Abraham, undergoes the circumcision ritual in order to realize His commitment to the Law: "Fulfilling the Law, of Your own will You accepted circumcision in the flesh." The particular outlook of Jesus Christ regarding the Law can help us better understand the broader meaning and implication of circumcision in transforming the world.

The circumcised man belonged to the people of the Covenant, to the people receiving God's promises and accepting God's pledges. Circumcision was part of the Covenant between God and the faithful Jews. Therefore, all Jewish men were circumcised. This bodily circumcision, however, was decreed by God as a type in order to prepare the people and orient them towards another kind of circumcision that was to come, which would be much more profound and salvific. The circumcision to come would not be of the flesh, but of the passions, by moving beyond one's old self and putting on the Grace of Renewal. Circumcision in the Old Testament gives way to Holy Baptism, which becomes a more authentic form of circumcision.

Baptism is the new circumcision founded on Grace. The New Israel, the Church of Christ, accepts through baptism not only male but also female disciples, and makes them all equal children before God by Grace. With Holy Baptism, our old wasted self is circumcised, cut off. We are born again, rejuvenated in Christ. We take on a new name indicative of our journey: from now on, we are called Christians. The newly baptized person is cut off from sin, immune to the power of death, forever sealed in the Name of Christ, and eternally given over to the Kingdom of God.

God, the Creator of the entire world, Who took on human flesh for the salvation of humankind, now offers Himself to fulfill the Old Testament ritual of circumcision. God does not abolish but fulfills and sanctifies the Old Law. The fleshly ritual of the Old Testament now gives way to the grace-radiating energies of the Holy Spirit. Let us reconnect to our own baptism and reconfirm our own entry into the Church by always placing our trust in Him, Who comes into the world in extreme humility to save our souls.