

Come, all you faithful, let us leave Judah and cross the desert to the Jordan to see the One who appeared in the flesh for us, seeking baptism in the streams of the Jordan. The Baptist refuses and says to Him in fear: "I do not dare to touch the divine Fire with my hand of clay! The sea fled and the Jordan turned back before You, O Savior! How can I place my hand on the Master before whom the seraphim tremble? The Jordan turned back when struck by Elisha with the mantle of Elijah. Will it not fall into the abyss of chaos when it sees You naked in its streams? Will it not burn me, becoming hot at contact with Your Fire?" But the Jordan said to John: "O Baptist, why do you hesitate to baptize my Lord? Why do you hinder the purification of all the nations? He has sanctified the whole creation—allow Him to sanctify me now along with the nature of water. Is it not for this purpose that He manifests Himself?"

Doxastichon of the Aposticha, Vespers

O Lover of Mankind, Jesus, robed in my poverty, You came into the midst of the people of Your own house. You asked one of Your servants for baptism. Seeing You, John cried out: "How can I baptize You, O sinless Lord and supreme Goodness!"

Glory be...
Now and always...

In His goodness, Christ comes to the streams of the River Jordan, to re-create our nature by grace in its flow. O divine Forerunner, receive Him with joy, and bathe in the waters the One who has willed it, Jesus, the only Lover of Mankind.

Sessional Hymns, Orthros

In fulfillment of the prophetic visions, let all the earth now rejoice! Let the mountains leap with joy! According to the Scriptures, O Jordan, turn back on your course and tremble before the Lord, for God made man has come to purify mankind of the fault of Adam!

Praises, Orthros

St. Ignatios of Antioch Melkite Church

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Sunday before Theophany Jan. 2, 2011

Tone: 7

Eothinon: 10

Today:

First day of the Forefeast of the Theophany

Commemoration of our Father among the Saints Sylvester, Pope of Rome (5th Class)

Coming Events:

Wed., Jan. 5 Paramony of Theophany, a day of strict fast

Theophany
Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water
6:30 PM Wednesday, January 5
Followed by covered dish dinner and celebration

Tues., Jan. 11 Parish Advisory Council, 6:30 PM

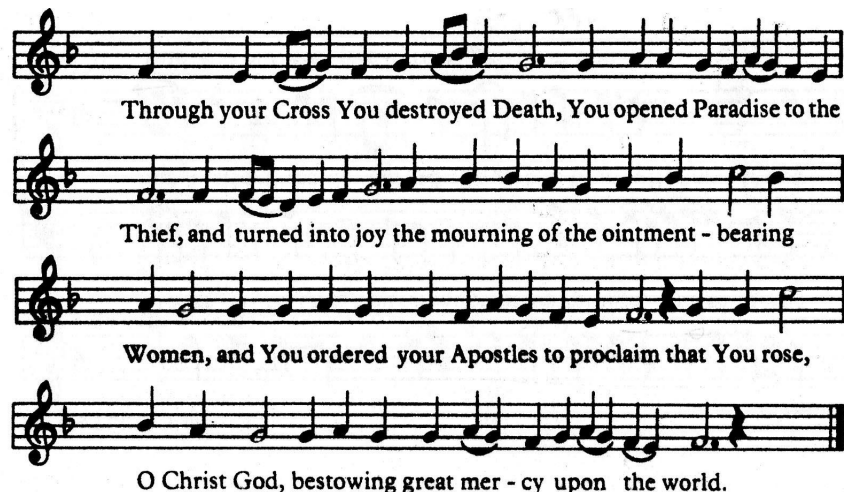
Publicans' Prayers on 2nd and 4th Fridays at 11:00 AM
And on 1st Saturdays at 5:00 PM

<u>Sunday</u>		<u>Daily</u>	
<i>Orthros</i>	<i>9:15 AM</i>	<i>Vespers</i>	<i>5:30 PM</i>
<i>Divine Liturgy</i>	<i>10:00 AM</i>		

This Sunday's Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Hymns:

Resurrectional Troparion, Tone 7



Through your Cross You destroyed Death, You opened Paradise to the
Thief, and turned into joy the mourning of the ointment - bearing
Women, and You ordered your Apostles to proclaim that You rose,
O Christ God, bestowing great mer - cy upon the world.

Troparion of the Preparation for Theophany, Tone 4

Make ready, Zebulon, and prepare, Nephtali; and you, Jordan River, stop your flow and receive with a thrill of joy the Master coming to be baptized. And you, Adam, rejoice with the first Mother, Eve, and hide not as you did of old in paradise: for Christ at the sight of your nakedness has come forth to clothe you with the robe of innocence. Indeed, Christ has come forth to renew the whole creation.

Troparion of our patron, St. Ignatios of Antioch

Kondakion of the Preparation, Tone 3

Today the Lord Christ has appeared in the Jordan's waters, and He has cried out to John: Fear not of baptizing me, for by my own will I have indeed come to save Adam, the first created man.

If water acts as a means of grace – pre-eminently in the sacrament of baptism, it is also used as a means of sanctification on many other occasions as well. That is why Orthodox are encouraged to drink from the water that has been blessed at Epiphany and to sprinkle themselves with it; they take it also to their homes, and keep it there to use from time to time. In all this they are not guilty of superstition. If they act so, it is because they are convinced that in virtue of Christ's incarnation, of His Baptism and Transfiguration, all material things can be made holy and 'spirit-bearing.'...This, then, is part of the meaning of Theophany: in the eyes of one who is a Christian, nothing should ever appear trivial or mean, for the redemptive and transforming grace of the Saviour extends to all things.

According to the Scriptures, You are the River of Peace, the Torrent of Delights, O almighty Lord. How can the river receive You in its waters, as you enter naked into it? For it was You who clothed the heavens with clouds and put to naught the wickedness of the Enemy, in order to grant mankind an incorruptible garment.

Sticheron of the Praises, Vespers

O Baptist, I am not telling you to step over any boundaries. I do not say to you, "Say to Me what you say to the sinners; give Me the advice you give to transgressors! Only baptize Me in silence and in expectation of all that will come from My Baptism. By doing this, you will receive a dignity greater than all the prophets; indeed, I will make you the greatest of all men on earth. Not one of them saw Me openly, but only in figures, symbols and dreams, while you have seen Me standing openly before you. I have indeed come to save Adam, the first-created man.

Ikos, January 2

Then all of a sudden it is time. All the windows of the house must be open no matter how cold the night so that Christ may bless the dwelling by His passing through on His way to the Jordan.

The young men rush to the river to bathe, Christ is coming to be baptized. They run removing clothing to be scattered on the branches of the trees.

The voice of the Lord over the waters...

The voice of the Lord in power!...

The voice of the Lord shakes the cedars,

The Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon. (Psalm 29)

It is said that as Christ passes by, the stately trees bow their heads, returning to their original position only when he is gone. Young men who have placed their clothing on those bowed trees may have a whole night's work retrieving them if they are late coming back from the river. When Christ has passed by, the branches once close to the ground will be many feet in the air and the clothes out of reach!

At last the children retire to bed, tired but happy to be able to take part. Even the youngest boy now asleep in his mother's arms smiles contentedly. *Happy are those whose hope is fixed on the Lord their God.*

Now our hearts are prepared to enter into the feast, having with word and action, story and song brought them to the contemplation of that which we cannot know with our minds or see with our eyes. Now we are truly ready to celebrate.

From *The Festal Menaion*:

In Christ's baptism at the hands of John, our own baptismal regeneration is already accomplished by anticipation. The many celebrations of the Eucharist are all a participation in the single and unique Last Supper; and in a similar way all our individual baptisms are a sharing in the baptism of Christ—they are the means whereby the 'grace of Jordan' is extended, so that it may be appropriated by each one of us personally...

Epistle : Sunday before Theophany, 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (p. 458)

Prokimenon (*Tone 6*)

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

Stichon: To you, O Lord, I have called: O my Rock, be not deaf to me!

Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy

My son Timothy be watchful in all things, bear with tribulation patiently, work as a preacher of the Good News, fulfill your ministry. As for me, I am already being poured out in sacrifice, and the time of my deliverance is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the just Judge, will give to me on that day: yet not to me only, but also to those who love his coming.

Alleluia (*Tone 4*)

May God have mercy on us and bless us.

Stichon: May he let his face shine upon us and have mercy on us.

Gospel: Sunday before Theophany , Mark 1:1-8 (*The Preaching of John the Baptist*)

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 you, who shall prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the desert, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'*" There came John in the desert, baptizing and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea went out to him, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and all were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "One mightier than I is coming after me, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Hymn to the Theotokos: *It is truly meet...*

Communion Hymn: *Praise the Lord...*

Post-communion: *We have seen the true light...*

Forefeast of Theophany

Although one can find various rules of feasting and fasting during the days between the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord and the Theophany, and for the days between the celebration of the Theophany and the Presentation of our Lord at the Temple (Feb. 2), all agree that the Paramony of Theophany (the day before the feast, Jan. 5, this year occurring on Monday) is to be a day of strict fast.

Excerpts from “Background and Meaning of Feasts” from *The Festal Menaion* translated by Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware:

In the eastern tradition (Theophany) celebrates Our Lord’s baptism in Jordan, not the adoration of the Magi...The basic meaning of the feast as a whole is summed up in its title...Theophany, ‘manifestation of God’. Christ’s baptism in the Jordan is a ‘manifestation of God’ to the world, in the first place because it forms the beginning of Our Lord’s public ministry; but secondly, and in a deeper sense, because at this baptism there was granted to the world a revelation of the Holy Trinity. All three Persons were made ‘manifest’ together: the Father testified from on high to the divine Sonship of Jesus; the Son received His Father’s testimony; and the Spirit was seen in the form of a dove, descending from the Father and resting upon the Son. ...

This theme of ‘manifestation’ or ‘revelation’ is expressed in particular under the symbolism of light: in the words of the troparion...Christ has ‘appeared and *enlightened* the world’. Thus, besides the title ‘Theophany’, 6 January is known also as the ‘Feast of Lights’. The church celebrates on this day the illumination of the world by the light of Christ: ‘Light from Light, Christ our God has shone upon the world, God made manifest’.

With these two ideas there goes a third: renewal, regeneration, re-creation. Christ’s baptism in Jordan renews our nature, for it is the prelude to our baptism in the font; and it renews and regenerates, not our human nature only, but the whole material creation.

Archbishop Joseph Raya, from his book *Theophany, on the preparation for the feast:*

Finally, the last preparation: on the night before the feast our Christian families gather to recite all the psalms in witness and proclamation of the “renewal of the whole creation.”

The psalmist has beautifully written,
*Let the earth praise the Lord...
Mountains and hills
Orchards and forests, (Psalm 148)*

As if the whole creation cannot be silent; it is led to sing out its praise of God. This is especially true on the feast of the Baptism of our Blessed Lord. Legend and tradition combine to produce an eloquent illustration of the meaning of this great feast.

On the eve of the Baptism the family are gathered— for such is the ancient tradition of the Eastern Church— to read aloud the psalms until the time has come for Our Lord to pass through on his way to be baptized. The family members each hold a candle and the light from these allows them to see the psalms but it also gives their faces a mysterious and almost unearthly look. First Father reads, then Mother, then the children who are old enough. Uncles, aunts, cousins, all take their turn.

The youngest child, too young to read is growing sleepy and rests his head on his mother’s arm, whispering “Is it time yet...has He come?” Mother soothes the child, “Not long now.” And the psalms continue to be read,

*I wait for the Lord
My soul waits for him...
My soul relies on the Lord
More than a watchman
On the coming of the dawn. (Psalm 130)*