

Sunday Before the Feast of Theophany
Twenty-Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

January 5, 2025

On January 5th we Commemorate:
Hieromartyr Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia and Martyr Theonas.
Venerable Syncletica of Alexandria.



Icon of the Baptism of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

1355 North 4th Street • Grand Junction, CO 81501 • 970-778-4160

<https://www.holywisdomorthodox.com>
holywisdomorthodox@gmail.com

Great Vespers, Saturday Evenings at 6:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, Sunday Mornings at 9:30 am (Hours at 9:05 am)
Paraklesis to the Theotokos, Wednesday Evenings at 6:00 pm
Very Reverend Archpriest Luke Uhl, Retired, Interim Rector

*Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission
is a Parish in the Diocese of the West
of the Orthodox Church in America
Under the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of
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Orthodox Church in America



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EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS

2

Sunday Before Theophany, (298) 2 Timothy 4:5-8

MY SON TIMOTHY, Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Sunday Before Theophany, (1) 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 will prepare Your way before You.” “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’” John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”



In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

On the Great Feast of Theophany, the Orthodox Church celebrates two major events in the divine economy of salvation for mankind. First, the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan river by John. Second, the manifestation of God as a Trinity of Three Persons.

“For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15)

The greatest wonder of all is that God condescended to become man after man disobeyed Him. Ineffably, the Creator became one with His creation, when One of the Trinity, specifically God the Son, was incarnate as the Theanthropos (the God-Man), Jesus Christ.

Being a true human being, and as the One Who alone is all-good and without sin, Jesus submitted in obedience to the very Law that He, the Law-Giver, established. And, as the Righteous One He obeyed and fulfilled all the commandments.

Thus, when the Prophet and Forerunner, John the Baptist, called upon the faithful to confess their sins and be baptized, Jesus followed in obedience. John knew, however, that Jesus did not need to repent and be baptized because He was sinless and totally obedient to the Law.

Nonetheless, being obedient to all the commandments in righteousness, Jesus chose as man to decisively reject sin and to be totally cleansed in the water of the river.

Disobedience separates us from God, and sin makes us unclean and incapable of being joined to God.

By His Incarnation (*celebrated on March 25 as the Feast of the Annunciation*) and His Nativity (*celebrated on December 25*), the Son of God joined human nature to divine nature, overcoming disobedience.

In all righteousness, obedient to the Law, through Baptism Jesus rejects sin and cleanses creation from the consequence of disobedience and sin: death.

We now are called to union with God through Baptism and adoption; we are called to righteousness by rejecting sin and disobedience; we are called to receive eternal life in union with God.

“And behold, the heavens were opened unto Him.” (Matthew 3:16)

Once the heavens were closed to man through the sin of Adam; now the heavens are opened to man through Christ fulfilling all righteousness.

Through our Baptism we are joined to Him Who joined Himself to us. In Him we are joined to the One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity was manifest to man at the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan to show us the great mystery of man in union with God.

Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In the Christian East the Baptism of our Lord receives the dominant emphasis in the Church’s annual celebration of Theophany (commonly called Epiphany in the West) on January 6. Yet this feast is celebrated, moreover, as the manifestation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This emphasis is clear in the Troparion of the day: *“When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan River, the worship of the Trinity was manifest; for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling You His beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truth of His word. You Who appeared and enlightened the world, O Christ, glory to You.”*

The dogma of the Holy Trinity pertains to theology in the strict sense; that is to say, *theology* meaning “*knowledge of God.*” The dogma of the Holy Trinity is not part of the Church’s proclamation *to the world*. On the contrary, it is a mystery shared only *within the Body of the Church*. Indeed, it is revealed to the believer in the very act by which he joins the Church, the initiatory mystery of Baptism. This is inferred in the Gospel we read on this Sunday.

The Orthodox Church is essentially and absolutely Trinitarian. In fact, the Trinitarian revelation at our Lord’s Baptism at the beginning of His ministry (*cf. Matthew 3:16-17*) is paralleled at the close of it by a corresponding command to baptize all nations *“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)*. The Church, said Origen in the third century, is “full of the Holy Trinity.”

The dogma of the Holy Trinity affirms that God has revealed to the human race His eternal inner life in two missions, in two *sendings forth*: *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son... God sent forth the Spirit of his Son...” (Galatians 3:4-6)*.

That is to say, the Father revealed himself in His Son as a visible Man in the external, categorical, documentable order of human history, and likewise He has revealed Himself by the Holy Spirit in the internal, transcendent order of transformed human consciousness. This is the revelation that the Church celebrates in the feast of the Theophany.

Both aspects of this revelation of the Father are essential to the being of the Church. First, by the horizontal, linear link by which, unto the end of time, we are joined back to the historical Christ (“you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”).

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Continued from page 4 ☞ Second, by the vertical, transcendent axis by which we are joined at all times to the God who reigns above us and in our hearts (“and behold, I am with you all days”). The cruciform conjunction of these two revelatory lines, the horizontal and the vertical, is the point where Christians live and worship.

The first of these dimensions is *anamnetic*; it is handed on and carried forward in historical memory (“Do this in remembrance of me”). It is Christological and Paschal. The second is *epikletic* and *transcendent* to the limitations of history (“Oh that you would rend the heavens! That you would come down!”). It is *Pneumatological* and Pentecostal.

There are not two different “economies” of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Both pertain to the single economy of redemption. Both the Son and the Holy Spirit are necessary to our return to the Father. They are, in the words of Irenaeus of Lyons, God’s two hands at work in this world.

In addition to His Baptism, other places in the life and ministry of Christ our Lord also provided special settings for the revelation of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, the Incarnation itself was such a setting, when God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to overshadow the Virgin Mary so that she conceived His Son in her womb (*cf. Luke 1:35*).

Likewise, this overshadowing Spirit descended on Jesus at His Transfiguration, while the Father’s voice once again identified His Son (*cf. Luke 9:34ff*). The same Trinitarian revelation took place in the Resurrection, when the Father raised his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Romans 8:11; cf. 1:4*).

And just as we are reborn in the Trinitarian name, many biographies of Christians portray them invoking the Holy Trinity in the hour of their death. By way of example, I may cite a memorable instance, which occurred on the evening of May 25, 735, when the earliest historian of the English people, Saint Bede the Venerable, went to God just after Vespers of the Feast of the Ascension. A description of his death was left us by his contemporary and fellow teacher, Cuthwin: “*And thus, on the floor of his cell, he chanted ‘Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit’ to its ending, and breathed his last.*”

Amen.

Homily by Father Patrick Henry Reardon, a well-known Orthodox pastor, homilist, writer, and teacher. He is pastor of All Saints’ Antiochian Orthodox Church in Chicago, Illinois, and a senior editor of Touchstone Magazine.

Holy Water and Its Use

Water is essential to life. But not only to physical survival: The true nature of water has its destiny in the salvation of man and the world.

At its blessing, water is restored to its original state. The prayer at the blessing of water reveals the true “nature” and “purpose” of water, and thus its divinely-instituted purpose in the world.

Being restored through the blessing to its proper function, water becomes a means of communion with God. Christ in His Baptism purified the nature of the waters. He came to save not only humanity but, through transformation, all of Creation.

A wonderful mystery is manifest at the blessing of water. God the Holy Spirit, descending upon the water, changes its physical properties. It again becomes incorrupt – remaining transformed and fresh for a very long time. Holy Water has the grace of the Holy Spirit to heal illness, to repel demons, to preserve and protect people and their homes, and to sanctify the faithful and various objects including gardens and livestock as well as icons and holy items.

Jesus sanctified the Jordan River at His Baptism, and thus fish, plants, animals, and the land itself was made holy through this water. Thus, following the Blessing of Waters at Theophany, the priest distributes bottles of Holy Water for the faithful to use in blessing their homes, gardens, and animals.

Every Orthodox family should have Holy Water at home, and use it in cases of illness, when leaving on a trip, when a child is frightened by a bad dream, or if someone feels threatened by evil influence or presence. Married couples do well to sprinkle Holy Water in the home after a bitter argument.

In the Old Testament Book of Genesis, creation began when the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. Thus, water and everything created is “very good” (Genesis 1:31). When creation becomes corrupted through our sins, God restores it by a new creation in Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The celebration of the Great Blessing of Water is an affirmation of this reality. At Christ’s Baptism, He lifted the curse of Adam’s sin and restored the goodness of God’s creation. When Christians are baptized, they are restored and sanctified in Christ. When we bless our homes with Holy Water they, too, are restored and “made holy.”

PATRISTIC WISDOM

Each believer as a person receives Baptism, governs his life by the holy commandments, and becomes a partaker of the Bread that makes divine and of the Cup. By these means Christ justified each one of us personally and restored us to obedience to the heavenly Father. He renewed the human nature He took from us, and by what He did and suffered in His Person united with our nature, He revealed it as sanctified, justified and completely obedient to the Father.

Saint Gregory Palamas

7 A NEW YEAR'S RESOLVE FOR REPENTANCE

The beginning of a new year is often regarded as the start of new beginnings, a time when we make New Year's resolutions.

But sometimes, our plans are misdirected focusing on what we desire and what we can control. But not everything is within our control.

In today's Gospel we hear the holy Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John preaching a different way, a baptism of repentance. That way is God's way, not my way. And His way will not be misdirected, nor will it fail.

Saint John the Baptist calls us to set aside our own wants and our own plans. He calls us to change our hearts to a new and better way of life.

This movement of changing heart is called *metánoia*, which literally means a "change of nous." It means turning around, going the other way, and taking a new path. Specifically, it means to choose God's path. For it is God Who truly fulfills our desires and fills us with His everlasting life.

While on the road to Damascus, Saul pursued what he thought was right, persecuting Christians. But encountering the Lord, he had a change of heart, became a Christian himself, and was named Paul. This did not lead to an easy life that Saint Paul might have wanted, but led to numerous struggles: he was whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and in constant danger.

In the Epistle reading today, we read a portion of his letter to Saint Timothy in which he explains how that moment of repentance – change of heart – opened him up to seeing life in a new way he never could have imagined:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

For his repentance, for taking the more narrow path, God granted Saint Paul eternal life in the Kingdom of heaven. A far, far better life than anything that could have resulted from his own desires.

And God will do likewise for us if we set aside our own ways and our own will. If we choose repentance – a turn toward God and His will – He will grant us the very same.

The message of repentance that the Forerunner proclaimed remains constant. We are encouraged to take the path of repentance, the one followed by Saint Paul and every saint before us.

When we repent, Christ is waiting to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Through Scripture, the Church, and the saints, Christ is showing us how to walk this path, a path we may not have considered, but one that will fill our hearts more than our own desires will. A path that will fill us with God himself.

Amen.

HYMNS AT THE DIVINE LITURGY

8

Tone 3, Troparion (*Resurrectional*)

Let the heavens rejoice. • Let the earth be glad. • For the Lord has shown strength with His arm. • He has trampled down death by death. • He has become the first born of the dead. • He has delivered us from the depths of hell, • and has granted to the world great mercy.

Tone 8, Troparion of the Temple, of the Midfeast of Pentecost

O Savior at the Middle of the Feast, • fill my thirsting soul with the waters of piety, as Thou didst cry to all: • "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink." • O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee.

Tone 4, Troparion (*of the Forefeast*)

The River Jordan was turned back by the mantle of Elisha, • after Elijah had been taken up to heaven. • The waters were parted in two, • and the stream became a dry path. • This was truly a type of baptism, • by which we pass over the stream of life. • Christ has shone forth in the Jordan to sanctify the waters.

Tone 3, Kontakion (*Resurrectional*)

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, • leading us from the gates of death. • On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices; • with the Prophets and Patriarchs • they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Tone 4, Kontakion of the Temple, of the Midfeast of Pentecost

Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, • cried to all in the midst of the feast of the law: "Come and draw the water of immortality." • We fall before Thee and faithfully cry: • "Grant us Thy mercies for Thou art the Fountain of our life."

Tone 2, 1st Kontakion (*of the Forefeast*)

Glory... O Christ, in Thy compassion and infinite mercy, • Thou art coming as a man to be baptized in the Jordan, • in order to take away the many transgressions of us all, • clothing me in the garment of ancient glory • of which I was cruelly stripped bare.

Tone 4, 2nd Kontakion (*of the Forefeast*)

Both now... Today the Lord enters the Jordan and cries out to John: • "Do not be afraid to baptize Me. • For I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man."

Prokeimenon (*Sunday Before Theophany*)

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. (*Psalm 27:9a*)



Tone 3, Troparion (*Resurrectional*)

Let the heavens rejoice. • Let the earth be glad. • For the Lord has shown strength with His arm. • He has trampled down death by death. • He has become the first born of the dead. • He has delivered us from the depths of hell, • and has granted to the world • great mercy.

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The Revelation of the Holy Trinity

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In the Christian East the Baptism of our Lord receives the dominant emphasis in the Church's annual celebration of Theophany (commonly called Epiphany in the West) on January 6. Yet this feast is celebrated, moreover, as the manifestation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This emphasis is clear in the Troparion of the day: "*When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan River, the worship of the Trinity was manifest; for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling You His beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truth of His word. You Who appeared and enlightened the world, O Christ, glory to You.*"

The dogma of the Holy Trinity pertains to theology in the strict sense; that is to say, *theology* meaning "*knowledge of God.*" The dogma of the Holy Trinity is not part of the Church's proclamation *to the world*. On the contrary, it is a mystery shared only *within the Body of the Church*. Indeed, it is revealed to the believer in the very act by which he joins the Church, the initiatory mystery of Baptism. This is inferred in the Gospel we read on this Sunday.

The Orthodox Church is essentially and absolutely Trinitarian. In fact, the Trinitarian revelation at our Lord's Baptism at the beginning of His ministry (*cf. Matthew 3:16-17*) is paralleled at the close of it by a corresponding command to baptize all nations "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" (*Matthew 28:19*). The Church, said Origen in the third century, is "full of the Holy Trinity."

The dogma of the Holy Trinity affirms that God has revealed to the human race His eternal inner life in two missions, in two *sendings forth*: "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son... God sent forth the Spirit of his Son...*" (*Galatians 3:4-6*).

That is to say, the Father revealed himself in His Son as a visible Man in the external, categorical, documentable order of human history, and likewise He has revealed Himself by the Holy Spirit in the internal, transcendent order of transformed human consciousness. This is the revelation that the Church celebrates in the feast of the Theophany.

Both aspects of this revelation of the Father are essential to the being of the Church. First, by the horizontal, linear link by which, unto the end of time, we are joined back to the historical Christ ("you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes").

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Continued from page 4 ☞ Second, by the vertical, transcendent axis by which we are joined at all times to the God who reigns above us and in our hearts ("and behold, I am with you all days"). The cruciform conjunction of these two revelatory lines, the horizontal and the vertical, is the point where Christians live and worship.

The first of these dimensions is *anamnetic*; it is handed on and carried forward in historical memory ("Do this in remembrance of me"). It is Christological and Paschal. The second is *epikletic* and *transcendent* to the limitations of history ("Oh that you would rend the heavens! That you would come down!"). It is *Pneumatological* and Pentecostal.

There are not two different "economies" of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Both pertain to the single economy of redemption. Both the Son and the Holy Spirit are necessary to our return to the Father. They are, in the words of Irenaeus of Lyons, God's two hands at work in this world.

In addition to His Baptism, other places in the life and ministry of Christ our Lord also provided special settings for the revelation of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, the Incarnation itself was such a setting, when God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to overshadow the Virgin Mary so that she conceived His Son in her womb (*cf. Luke 1:35*).

Likewise, this overshadowing Spirit descended on Jesus at His Transfiguration, while the Father's voice once again identified His Son (*cf. Luke 9:34ff*). The same Trinitarian revelation took place in the Resurrection, when the Father raised his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Romans 8:11; cf. 1:4*).

And just as we are reborn in the Trinitarian name, many biographies of Christians portray them invoking the Holy Trinity in the hour of their death. By way of example, I may cite a memorable instance, which occurred on the evening of May 25, 735, when the earliest historian of the English people, Saint Bede the Venerable, went to God just after Vespers of the Feast of the Ascension. A description of his death was left us by his contemporary and fellow teacher, Cuthwin: "*And thus, on the floor of his cell, he chanted 'Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit' to its ending, and breathed his last.*"

Amen.

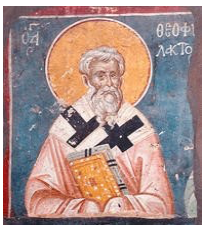
Homily by Father Patrick Henry Reardon, a well-known Orthodox pastor, homilist, writer, and teacher. He is pastor of All Saints' Antiochian Orthodox Church in Chicago, Illinois, and a senior editor of Touchstone Magazine.



Евангелие

Начало Евангелия Иисуса Христа, Сына Божия, как написано у пророков: вот, Я посылаю Ангела Моего пред лицом Твоим, который приготовит путь Твой пред Тобою. Глас вопиющего в пустыне: приготовьте путь Господу, прямыми сделайте стези Ему. Явился Иоанн, крестя в пустыне и проповедуя крещение покаяния для прощения грехов. И выходили к нему вся страна Иудейская и Иерусалимляне, и крестились от него все в реке Иордане, исповедуя грехи свои. Иоанн же носил одежду из верблюжьего волоса и пояс кожаный на чреслах своих, и ел акриды и дикий мёд. И проповедовал, говоря: идёт за мною Сильнейший меня, у Которого я недостойн, наклонившись, развязать ремень обуви Его; я крестил вас водою, а Он будет крестить вас Духом Святым (Мк. 1, 1–8).

реченное через пророков, что Он Назореем наречется (Мф. 2, 13-23).



Блаженный Феофилакт Болгарский

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

Зачало евангелия Иисуса Христа, Сына Божия: якоже есть писано во пророцех: се аз посылаю ангела Моего пред лицом Твоим, иже уготовит путь Твой пред Тобою. Глас вопиющего в пустыни: уготовайте путь Господень, правы творите стези Его. Иоанна,

последнего из пророков, евангелист представляет началом евангелия Сына Божия: потому что **конец ветхого есть начало нового завета**. Что касается свидетельства о Предтече, то оно взято из двух пророков, — из Малахии (3, 1): се аз посылаю ангела Моего и призрит на путь пред лицом Моим, — и из Исаии (40, 3): глас вопиющего в пустыни и прочее. Это — слова Бога Отца к Сыну. **Он именует Предтечу ангелом за его ангельскую и почти бесплотную жизнь, и за возвешение и указание грядущего Христа**. Иоанн уготовлял путь Господень, приготовляя, посредством крещения, души иудеев к принятию Христа. Пред лицом Твоим — значит: близок к Тебе ангел Твой. Этим означает родственная близость Предтечи ко Христу, так как и пред царями шествуют преимущественно родственные особы. Глас вопиющего в пустыни, то есть, в пустыне Иорданской, а еще более в синагоге иудейской, которая была пуста в отношении к добру. Путь означает новый завет, а стези — ветхий, как неоднократно ☞ 2

☞ нарушаемый иудеями. К пути, то есть, к новому завету они должны были подготовиться, а стези ветхого исправить: ибо хотя древле они и приняли их, но впоследствии совратились со стезей своих и заблудились.

*Бысть Иоанн крестяй в пустыни, и проповедаая крещение покаяния во отпущение грехов. И исхождаше к нему вся иудейская страна, и иерусалимляне: и крещашуся вси во Иордане реце от него, исповедающе грехи своя. Иоанново крещение не имело отпущения грехов, а вводило для людей одно покаяние. Но как же Марк говорит здесь: во отпущение грехов? На это отвечаем, что Иоанн проповедовал крещение покаяния. А эта проповедь к чему вела? к отпущению грехов, то есть, ко крещению Христову, которое заключало уже в себе и отпущение грехов. Когда мы говорим, например, что такой-то пришел пред царем, повелевая приготовить пищу для царя: то разумеем, что исполняющие это повеление бывают благодетельствованы царем. Так и здесь. **Предтеча проповедовал крещение покаяния для того, чтобы люди, покаившись и принявши Христа, получили оставление грехов.***

*Бе же Иоанн оболчен власы вельблужди, и пояс усмен о чреслах его, и ядый акриды и мед дивий. Мы уже говорили об этом в евангелии от Матфея: теперь же скажем только о том, что там опущено, именно, что Иоаннова одежда была знамение сетования, и пророк показывал таким образом, что кающемся должно плакать, так как вретнице обыкновенно служит знаком плача: кожаный же пояс означал омертвелость иудейского народа. А что сия одежда означала плач, об этом говорит сам Господь: *плакахом вам и не рыдасте*, называя здесь плачем жизнь Предтечи: потому что далее говорит *прииде Иоанн ни ядый, ни пия, и глаголет: беса имать (Матф. 11, 18)*. Равно пища Иоаннова, указывая здесь, конечно, на воздержание, была вместе и образом духовной пищи тогдашних иудеев, которые не ели чистых птиц небесных, то есть не помышляли ни о чем высоком, а питались только словом возвышенным и направленным горе, но опять упадающим долу. Ибо саранча (акриды) есть такое насекомое, которое прыгает вверх, а потом опять падает на землю. Равным образом народ ел и мед производимый пчелами, то есть пророками: но он оставался у него без ухода и не был умножаем углублением и правильным разумением, хотя евреи и думали, что они разумеют и постигают писание. Они имели писания, как бы некоторый мед: но не трудились над ними и не исследовали их.*

И проповедаше, глаголя: грядет крепкий мене, во след мене, емуже несь достоин преклонся разрешити ремень сапог Его. аз убо ☞ 3

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2 ☞ крестих вы водою; той же крестит вы Духом Святым. Я, говорит, недостоин быть даже самым последним рабом его, который бы разрешил ремень, то есть, узел на ремне сапогов его. Понимают впрочем и так: все приходившие и крестившиеся от Иоанна разрешались посредством покаяния от уз грехов своих, когда веровали во Христа. Таким образом Иоанн у всех разрешал ремни и узлы греховные: а у Иисуса не мог разрешить такого ремня, потому что у него и не нашел сего ремня, то есть, греха.

Аминь.

Протоиерей Александр Шаргунов

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.



В Неделю пред Богоявлением, прежде чем мы вступим в праздник на водах, где **открывается тайна Пресвятой Троицы, Святая Церковь напоминает о том, как мы должны подготовиться к этому дню.** Мы слышим Евангелие от Марка, самые первые его слова: *«Начало*

Евангелия Господа Иисуса Христа».

Святые отцы обращают наше внимание на то, что каждое из четырех Евангелий начинается с разных отправных точек. А **начало Евангелия от Марка - Крещение Господне. Бог, ставший человеком, являет совершенство человека. И в крещении каждый из нас становится подобным Христу по дару Его.**

А где для нас начало Евангелия? Для **верующего человека Евангелие начинается, когда Христос входит в его ум и сердце Своей благодатью.** Мы узнаём, что есть жизнь вечная, есть истинный Бог, ставший человеком. Все тайны нашего спасения, запечатленные в четырех Евангелиях, открываются нам, когда мы благодатно приобщаемся тайне нашего рождения от воды и Духа.

Как говорит пророк Малахия: *«Вот, Я посылаю Ангела Моего пред лицем Твоим, который приготовит путь Твой пред Тобою».* Святой Иоанн Предтеча называется Ангелом, потому что он, больший из всех, рожденных женами, *«сподобившийся коснуться веру Творца мира»*, первый из людей, который увидит явление Бога Пресвятой Троицы во святом Крещении. Этот человек называется Ангелом, потому что он первым из людей показывает, *что* Бог может сделать с человеком, - восстановить его бессмертное, небесное, ангельское достоинство.

Он знает своим тридцатилетним подвигом молитвы в пустыне, что всё, что в мире существует, - от Бога. Всё, что люди дают друг другу, они от Бога берут. Поэтому он весь устремлен к Богу. У него нет

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3 ☞ страха, потому что он знает, что никто ничего не может сделать на земле, если Бог не попустит ради Своей благой цели.

Предтеча говорит об исполнении пророчества: *«Глас вопиющего в пустыне: приготовьте путь Господу, прямыми сделайте стези Ему».* Что такое «пустыня»? Народ приходит к Предтече в пустыню, чтобы исповедовать грехи свои. Но здесь есть больший смысл. Это души человеческие, не имеющие Бога. Пустыня - это все человечество, которое иссохло от грехов, как лишенная капли влаги земля.

«Явился Иоанн, крестя в пустыне и проповедуя крещение покаяния для прощения грехов». Почему проповедь Иоанна была столь действенной, и толпы выходили слушать его и принимали Крещение, которое было только тенью того, что совершается сегодня? Это был человек, который поистине любил Бога и который поистине жил благою вестью о спасении. Не только его слова - вся его жизнь была обличением современной ему жизни. Пустыня, в которой он жил, его одежда из верблюжьего волоса, и пояс кожаный на чреслах (имеющие мягкие одежды живут во дворцах, говорит Христос), и пища беднейших из бедных - акриды и дикий мед - все это свидетельствует о его великой простоте и причастности страданиям народа, его нищете.

Погружение в Иорданскую воду не было новым обрядом, но своим пророчеством Предтеча придает ему новый смысл. Но **самое главное - и в этом всё служение Предтечи - велиим гласом он возвещает, что вслед его идет Некто, Который в действительности Сильнейший его.** Настолько сильнейший, что он считает себя недостойным исполнить служение раба - наклонившись, развязать ремень обуви Его: *«Я крещу вас в воде, но Он будет крестить вас Духом Святым».*

Господь покажет, что значит Его Крещение. Водю и Кровью, истекающими из прободенного копием ребра, водю и Духом Святым, огнем Пятидесятницы. Мы, священники, крестим сегодня тоже водю, но Господь, Который идёт впереди каждого человека, через смерть и Воскресение присутствует всегда среди таинства Церкви и крестит всех Духом Святым. Когда мы произносим страшные, святые слова, небо сочетается с землей, Бог соединяется с человеком. Но принятие этого дара нами и теми, кто входит в воду, зависит от того, насколько мы все, стоящие здесь, оказываемся достойными этих слов.

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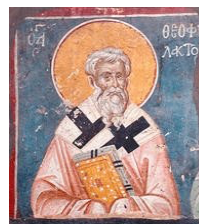
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Блаженный Феофилакт Болгарский

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

*Зачало евангелия Иисуса Христа, Сына Божия: якоже есть писано во пророцех: се аз посылаю ангела Моего пред лицом Твоим, иже уготовит путь Твой пред Тобою. Глас вопиющего в пустыни: *уготовайте путь Господень, правы творите стези Его*. Иоанна, последнего из пророков, евангелист представляет началом евангелия Сына Божия: потому что **конец ветхого есть начало нового завета**. Что касается свидетельства о Предтече, то оно взято из двух пророков, — из Малахии (3, 1): *се аз посылаю ангела Моего и призрит на путь пред лицом Моим*, — и из Исаии (40, 3): *глас вопиющего в пустыни и прочее*. Это — слова Бога Отца к Сыну. **Он именует Предтечу ангелом за его ангельскую и почти бесплотную жизнь, и за возвешение и указание грядущего Христа.** Иоанн уготовлял путь Господень, приготовляя, посредством крещения, души иудеев к принятию Христа. Пред лицом Твоим — значит: близок к Тебе ангел Твой. Этим означает родственная близость Предтечи ко Христу, так как и пред царями шествуют преимущественно родственные особы. Глас вопиющего в пустыни, то есть, в пустыне Иорданской, а еще более в синагоге иудейской, которая была пуста в отношении к добру. Путь означает новый завет, а стези — ветхий, как неоднократно ☞ 2*

2 ☞ нарушаемый иудеями. К пути, то есть, к новому завету они должны были приготовиться, а стези ветхого исправить: ибо хотя древле они и приняли их, но впоследствии совратились со стезей своих и заблудились.

Бысть Иоанн крестяй в пустыни, и проповеда я крещение покаяния во отпущение грехов. И исхождаше к нему вся иудейская страна, и иерусалимляне: и крещахуся вси во Иордане реце от него, исповедающе грехи своя. Иоанново крещение не имело отпущения грехов, а вводило для людей одно покаяние. Но как же Марк говорит здесь: *во отпущение грехов?* На это отвечаем, что Иоанн проповедовал крещение покаяния. А эта проповедь к чему вела? к отпущению грехов, то есть, ко крещению Христову, которое заключало уже в себе и отпущение грехов. Когда мы говорим, например, что такой-то пришел пред царем, повелевая приготовить пищу для царя: то разумеем, что исполняющие это повеление бывают благодетельствованы царем. Так и здесь. **Предтеча проповедовал крещение покаяния для того, чтобы люди, покаявшись и принявши Христа, получили оставление грехов.**

Бе же Иоанн оболчен власы вельблужди, и пояс усмен о чреслах его, и ядый акриды и мед дивий. Мы уже говорили об этом в евангелии от Матфея: теперь же скажем только о том, что там опущено, именно, что Иоаннова одежда была знаменем сетования, и пророк показывал таким образом, что кающемуся должно плакать, так как вретиче обыкновенно служит знаком плача: кожаный же пояс означал омертвелость иудейского народа. А что сия одежда означала плач, об этом говорит сам Господь: *плакахом вам и не рыдасте*, называя здесь плачем жизнь Предтечи: потому что далее говорит *прииде Иоанн ни ядый, ни пия, и глаголет: беса имать (Матф. 11, 18)*. Равно пища Иоаннова, указывая здесь, конечно, на воздержание, была вместе и образом духовной пищи тогдашних иудеев, которые не ели чистых птиц небесных, то есть не помышляли ни о чем высоком, а питались только словом возвышенным и направленным горе, но опять упадающим долу. Ибо саранча (акриды) есть такое насекомое, которое прыгает вверх, а потом опять падает на землю. Равным образом народ ел и мед производимый пчелами, то есть пророками: но он оставался у него без ухода и не был умножаем углублением и правильным разумением, хотя евреи и думали, что они разумеют и постигают писание. Они имели писания, как бы некоторый мед: но не трудились над ними и не исследовали их.

И проповедаше, глаголя: грядет крепкий мене, во след мене, емуже несмь достоин преклонся разрешити ремень сапог Его. Аз убо ☞ 3

2 ☞ *крестих вы водою; той же крестит вы Духом Святым.* Я, говорит, недостойн быть даже самым последним рабом его, который бы разрешил ремень, то есть, узел на ремне сапогов его. Понимают впрочем и так: все приходившие и крестившиеся от Иоанна разрешались посредством покаяния от уз грехов своих, когда веровали во Христа. Таким образом Иоанн у всех разрешал ремни и узы греховные: а у Иисуса не мог разрешить такого ремня, потому что у него и не нашел сего ремня, то есть, греха.

Аминь.

Протоиерей Александр Шаргунов

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.



В Неделю пред Богоявлением, прежде чем мы вступим в праздник на водах, где **открывается тайна Пресвятой Троицы, Святая Церковь напоминает о том, как мы должны подготовиться к этому дню.** Мы слышим Евангелие от Марка, самые первые его слова: *«Начало Евангелия Господа Иисуса Христа».*

«Начало Евангелия Господа Иисуса Христа».

Святые отцы обращают наше внимание на то, что каждое из четырех Евангелий начинается с разных отправных точек. А **начало Евангелия от Марка - Крещение Господне. Бог, ставший человеком, являет совершенство человека. И в крещении каждый из нас становится подобным Христу по дару Его.**

А где для нас начало Евангелия? **Для верующего человека Евангелие начинается, когда Христос входит в его ум и сердце Своей благодатью.** Мы узнаём, что есть жизнь вечная, есть истинный Бог, ставший человеком. Все тайны нашего спасения, запечатленные в четырех Евангелиях, открываются нам, когда мы благодатно приобщаемся тайне нашего рождения от воды и Духа.

Как говорит пророк Малахия: *«Вот, Я посылаю Ангела Моего пред лицем Твоим, который приготовит путь Твой пред Тобою».* Святой Иоанн Предтеча называется Ангелом, потому что он, больший из всех, рожденных женами, *«сподобившийся коснуться верху Творца мира»*, первый из людей, который увидит явление Бога Пресвятой Троицы во святом Крещении. Этот человек называется Ангелом, потому что он первым из людей показывает, *что* Бог может сделать с человеком, - восстановить его бессмертное, небесное, ангельское достоинство.

Он знает своим тридцатилетним подвигом молитвы в пустыне, что всё, что в мире существует, - от Бога. Всё, что люди дают друг другу, они от Бога берут. Поэтому он весь устремлен к Богу. У него нет ☞ 4

The Children's Word

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for to such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark 10:14

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A Ministry of the
Orthodox Christian Network



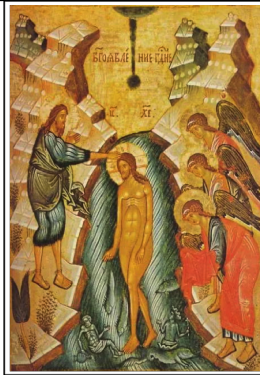
Prepare the way of the Lord!

What do you do when you get up every morning? When you have school, how do you get ready to go? What do you do first? You probably have a little routine. Maybe you get dressed, have some breakfast, brush your teeth, and so on (but maybe in a different order). We all have ways to prepare for our days.

Tomorrow, we will celebrate the great feast of Theophany. That's the day our Lord, Jesus Christ, was baptized! And today, the Gospel tells us all about it. Before Jesus was baptized, Saint John the Baptist went all over the place. He was baptizing people, and he was telling them to "Prepare the way of the Lord." Jesus was coming to start His work, and all the people had to prepare for Him.

And how did they prepare for Him? They repented. They said they were sorry for the wrong things they had done. That is how they prepared.

We can prepare for the Lord too! We can prepare to receive Communion by saying sorry to God and to others for the wrong things we have done. We can prepare for bed by repenting again. Repenting, and saying we are sorry, is the way we get ready for the Lord...just like the people did with John!



St. John prepared for the Lord!

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

Angel
Baptist
Celebration
Feastday
Forerunner
Gospel
John
Jordan
Prepare
Repent
Theophany

K	Q	D	F	V	N	J	T	E	F	I	N	U	P	P
L	O	P	T	E	A	F	H	G	R	H	L	V	O	W
J	Y	S	K	A	D	V	E	G	O	A	G	J	A	Z
Y	J	P	N	J	R	K	O	J	T	S	P	I	R	T
Y	K	G	J	I	O	F	P	I	F	G	P	E	J	X
X	E	J	F	O	J	V	H	Z	G	N	S	E	R	H
L	V	Y	R	O	U	T	A	Z	E	Z	Y	X	L	P
X	I	Y	C	T	R	D	N	W	C	A	D	W	U	L
F	T	Y	X	N	J	E	Y	K	D	C	U	T	U	J
B	A	P	T	I	S	T	R	T	N	E	P	E	R	J
H	N	H	E	M	F	Q	S	U	Z	U	K	V	E	U
E	Y	L	X	A	I	A	C	Z	N	K	V	Q	N	K
T	L	S	E	D	E	L	K	P	B	N	L	Q	G	I
R	G	F	P	F	W	Z	A	K	E	Z	E	A	G	D
C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	I	O	N	U	R	E	R

WHAT'S IN THE ICON?

Did you ever notice that Saint John sometimes has wings in his icon? Can you find them?

Saint John has wings in the icon, because he is a messenger. He gives messages from God, just like angels do!



SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIZER AND FORERUNNER

Have you ever played a guessing game, where you could hear somebody, but you couldn't see him or her? Maybe you were blindfolded, and then you had to guess who it was who spoke.

Tomorrow, we celebrate the feastday of Saint John the Baptist. He's called the Baptist, because he baptized Christ. But he's also called the Forerunner, because he came **before** Christ. He preached to people before Jesus did, because he wanted to get them ready for Jesus.



Some people didn't get it though! Some people just wanted to follow Saint John, not Jesus. Another saint of our Church, Saint Augustine, explained it like this, "John is the voice, but the Lord is the Word who was in the beginning. John is the voice that lasts for a time; from the beginning Christ is the Word who lives forever."

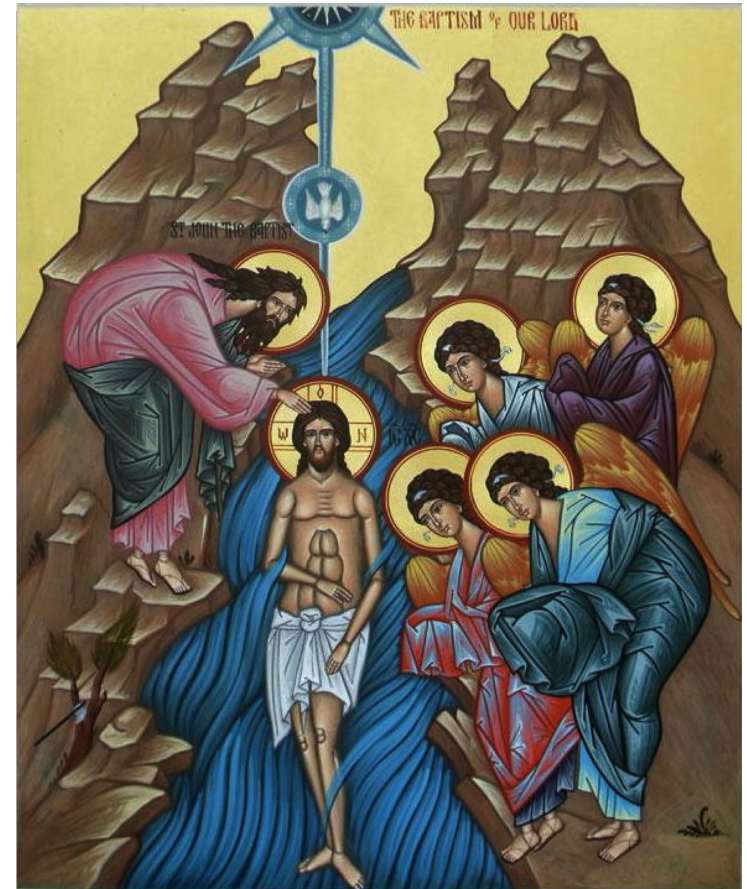
Sometimes people get mixed up about who is speaking though. They thought Saint John was the most important one. They thought Saint John was the one who was going to save them.

Let's celebrate this great saint tomorrow, and remember how Saint John was the one speaking the voice, but He was telling people about the Word, and that is our Lord, Jesus Christ!

We celebrate St. John on Wednesday, January 7th (OC: Jan. 20th).

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This is my beloved Son!



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