

THEOPHANY

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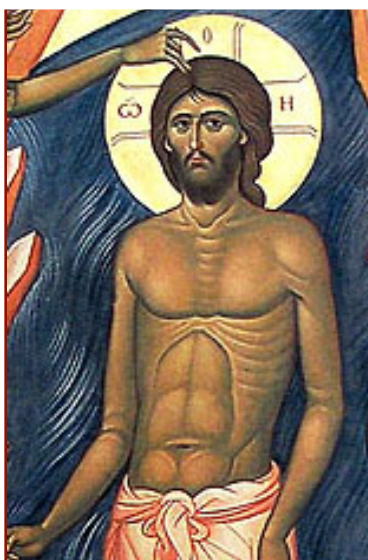
JANUARY

6

THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

On January 6th we commemorate Christ's baptism by John the Forerunner in the river Jordan, and the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry.

The feast is called Theophany because at the baptism of Christ the Holy Trinity appeared clearly to mankind for the first time- the Father's voice is heard from Heaven, the Son of God is incarnate and standing physically in the Jordan, and the Holy Spirit descends on Him in the form of a dove.



On the Feast of Theophany after the Vespereal Divine Liturgy celebrated on the eve of the feast and after the divine Liturgy on the day of Theophany, the Great Blessing of Waters takes place in the church. In many parts of the world the Orthodox Christians gather at larger bodies of water (rivers, lakes, and ocean) to bless the water. The blessed water is used by the faithful for consumption and blessing of their homes.

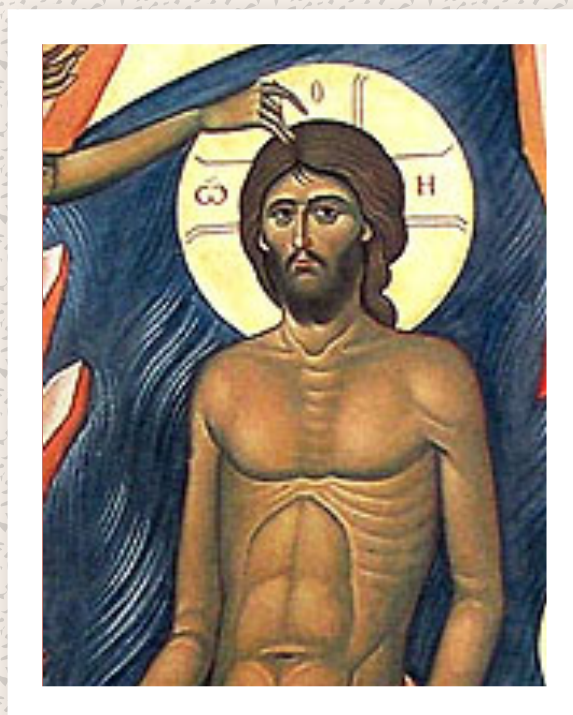
SAINT JOHN

Saint John the Baptist touches Christ's head, indicating His humanity. He also gestures toward heaven with his left hand, indicating Christ's divinity. It is not the Baptist who blesses Christ, but Christ who blesses Saint John when he puts his hand upon His head.



JESUS CHRIST

Christ is baptized, not because He needs purification, but "to identify Himself with our purification" says Saint John of Damaskos. Humbly, Christ identifies with mankind, in all our brokenness. His has come to earth to redeem us from our sins!



Following the feast of Theophany the Orthodox Christians invite the priest to come and bless their homes with the water which was blessed in the church on the feast of Theophany. The entire family gathers with the priest to pray for the family leaving in the house as well as for the departed relatives.

THE VOICE AND THE DOVE

The voice of the Father and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, reveal Christ as one of the Holy Trinity. A dove reminds us of Noah's flood. The moment of Christ's baptism indicates our release from the flood of sin.



ANGELS

Angels are shown attending to and glorifying the Lord. Covered hands and bowed heads show submission to the God-made-man. Their response to our Lord and Savior is what ours is supposed to be, as well.



Troparion of the Feast: When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made 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 truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God, You have revealed Yourself, and have enlightened the world, glory to You!

THE TREE AND THE AXE

A tree bearing no good fruit is shown with an axe, ready to be cut down. Saint John the Baptist warns us not to be fruitless, saying, "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10). What a contrast to Christ's ministry, which produces every good fruit!



JORDAN RIVER

By Christ's baptism, water itself was blessed, becoming water of renewal. Fish swim both down and upstream. Why? To show the Jordan River and the seas are turned back, as was foretold in Psalm 113. The Jordan is represented as a man fleeing and the seas are symbolized by a sea dragon.



Kontakion of the Feast: Today You have shone forth to the world, O Lord, and the light of Your countenance has been marked on us. Knowing You, we sing Your praises. You have come and revealed Yourself, O unapproachable Light.

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**TEXT:GREEK ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA AND ORTHODOX
METROPOLITANATE OF HONG KONG AND SOUTHEAST ASIA**