

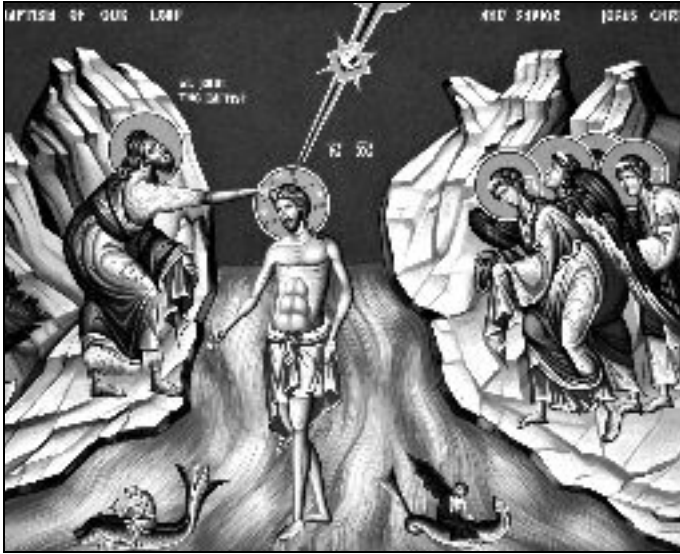


Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

Sun, January 3, 2021 - Forefeast of Theophany

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 5.

Sunday before Theophany. Holy Prophet Malachi (400 B.C.)



Hymns for Today

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Prepare, O Zebulon, and adorn thyself, O Naphtali! River Jordan, cease flowing, and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized! Adam, rejoice with our first Mother, and do not hide yourselves as you did of old in Paradise; for having seen you naked, He has appeared to clothe you with the first garment. Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of man, and we cry to Thee: "O Lord, save us!"

Endowed with the gift of prophecy, O Malachi, thou didst clearly proclaim the saving coming of Christ to the world. His brightness has brought light to the whole universe.

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."

Epistle Reading - 2 Timothy 4:5-8

But you 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.

Gospel Reading - 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."

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from Holy Trinity Orthodox Church. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting.

THIS WEEK'S SERVICE SCHEDULE

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

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SAT, Jan 2: 5 PM Great Vespers

SUN, Jan 3: 8:40 AM Hours, 9 AM Divine Liturgy

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Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

TUES, Jan 5: 6:30 PM Compline w/ Litya,
Great Blessing of the Waters

WED, Jan 6: 8:50 AM Hour, 9 AM Divine Liturgy,
Parastas for Fr. Paul & Mat. Catherine Holoviak

WED, Jan 6: Outdoor Home Blessings

Beginning at 1 PM in Miners Mill / Parsons
(see the note below about this year's blessing)

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SAT, Jan 9: 5 PM Great Vespers

SUN, Jan 10: 8:40 AM Hours, 9 AM Divine Liturgy,
Parish Council Meeting

2021 "OUTDOOR" HOME BLESSINGS

PLEASE READ FOR INSTRUCTIONS

The Blessing of Homes will begin as usual on the Feast of Theophany (Jan 6) at 1 PM beginning in Miner's Mill /Parsons (see the schedule below as it has changed slightly from last year). In an effort to keep everyone safe during the pandemic we are going to bless the outside of the home only. There will be no preparation needed on your end. Here's how it will work:

- Upon arrival at your home you may, if you like, hand Fr. Innocent and his blessing crew (Ephraim & Andrew) your list of living & departed family. You can come outside with us or you may stay inside.
- We will begin the usual order of prayers on the front porch or by the front door. We will bless around the home or whatever is easily accessible.
- Finally, as usual, we will sing many years and memory eternal for your family.
- If the weather is bad, we will postpone that day's home blessings until the next scheduled day.
- The homes to be blessed will be based on last year's list. If Fr. Innocent has not blessed your home, please contact him to get on the list.

- There will be an opt-out list in the Vestibule as usual. If you need to reschedule a home blessing to may also do so on the list.

Home Blessing Schedule

Wed, Jan 6th: Miners Mill & Parsons (1:00 PM - 6 PM)

Thurs, Jan 7th: Hudson, Plains, Laflin, Pittston, Bald Mountain (11 AM - 5 PM)

Friday, Jan 8th: Mountaintop, Hanover Twp, Nanticoke Area (11 AM - 5 PM)

Tues, Jan 12th: Wilkes Barre City & Township, Kingston & Westside, and homes missed earlier (11 AM - 5 PM)

By Appointment: Back Mountain, Outside of Area

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

JAN 10: PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Next week we will have our monthly Parish Council Meeting immediately following Divine Liturgy.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES - MANY YEARS!

January Birthdays: Coleen King (1/1), Mary Krill (1/1), Greg Polk (1/4), Melissa Donlick (1/5), Margaret Krout (1/7), David Welgus (1/11), Bernard Bolubiewski (1/20), Josie Bisset (1/31), Amanda Benczkowski, Matthias Haugh

This Week's Birthdays: Coleen King (1/1), Mary Krill (1/1), Greg Polk (1/4), Melissa Donlick (1/5), Margaret Krout (1/7)

Altar Server Schedule

Sunday, Jan 3: Christopher D, Andrew C

Sunday, Jan 10: Kaleb D, Symeon C

Sunday, Jan 17: Alex H, Vladimir H

Sunday, Jan 24: Tommy D, Alec B

PARISH PRAYER LIST Living: Cynthia Dulsky, Theodore & Elenor Sovryda, Nadine Breisch, Rosalie Bagenski, Sonja & Leanne Kay, Brian Cawley, Josie Bissett, Lisa & Scott Harvey, Daniel & Shannon Bissett, Rebecca King, Delores Karas, Antonette Terry, Archpriest Daniel & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Mat Delores Donlick &

Fr. Daniel Donlick, Violet Filipi, Catherine, Danny Gobish, Lorraine Pace, Camden Thomas, Peter Holoviak & Family, Mary Krill, Marni Bachman & Family, Rose Marie, Elaine Benczkowski, Helen Gudaitis, Mahaffey Family, George Scott, Evelyn Kosmiski, Joe Sloan

Newly Departed: Archbishop David, Mitty Woytowich, Mary Ellen, Beatrice Peck

Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine “those who sat in darkness,” and “in the region of the shadow of death” (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but “to bury human

sin by water,” to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify “the nature of water” and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.

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The Theophany Icon Explained

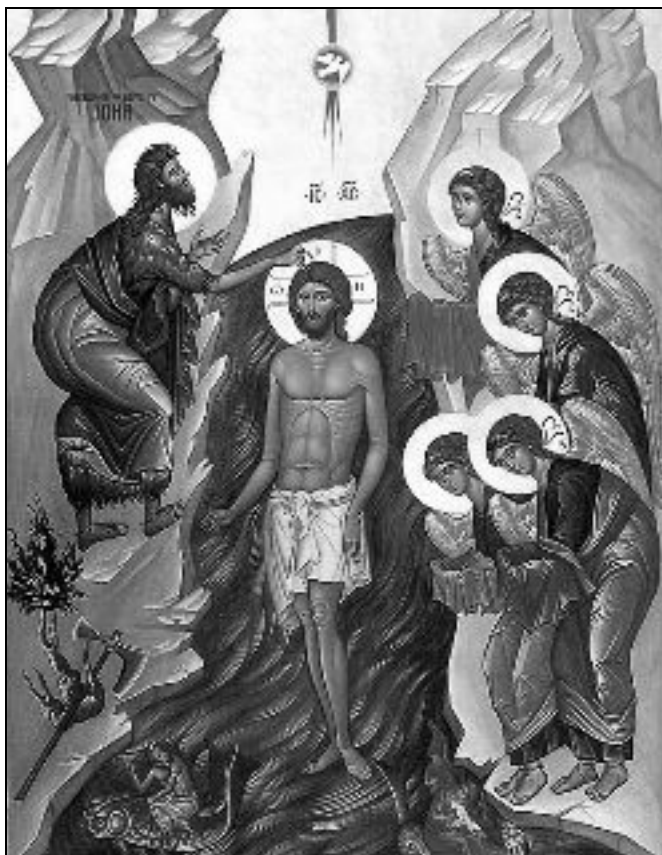
By Dn Jeremiah / Student at St Tikhon’s Seminary

The symbolism of this icon is deep and rich. There is one particular part I want to focus on. Christ is purposely depicted with little or no clothing. But why is that significant?

All throughout the creation narrative in Genesis we see God creating and then saying it is “good.” Man and woman were created together in God’s image. They were both beautiful, and while they lacked physical garments, they were clothed in the glory of the “image” and “likeness” of God. However, when they fell into sin, they hid in shame until God brought them garments of skin to wear (which symbolizes the sinful tendency that now obscures our true nature). Their natural beauty was transformed into an object of shame. Adam and Eve fell, and with them fell creation.

Now, enter Jesus Christ: he represents the second Adam (1 Cor 15). In shame and nakedness, Adam hid. Yet Christ comes in his majesty, both as God and man, both in glory

and nakedness completely unashamed, representing the beauty of the undefiled human made possible through Him (and in the subsequent centuries, Christians were often baptized without any clothing, shedding the garments of the “old man” to die in Christ and be resurrected in Him). But why was Christ baptized if He had no sin?



While Christ was baptized in the Jordan River, it was really the Jordan and all of creation that was baptized in Christ. As Canticle Four of Compline of Theophany states, *At Thine appearing in the body, the earth was sanctified, the waters blessed, the heaven enlightened, and mankind was set loose from the bitter tyranny of the enemy.*

We see the beginning of a new creation in Theophany. Things are being set right. Christ has come not only to cleanse and restore mankind, but to adopt us as heirs into his Kingdom. And when we receive His glory, not only are we redeemed, but we draw all of creation with us into the final restoration. That is why “creation groans” in eager expectation, awaiting the glorification of the children of God. (Rom. 8)

A few other notes about the Icon:

1) At the top the Holy Spirit is descending upon Jesus as a dove, the Holy Spirit is depicted in a Mandorla. In this manner, The Father, using His own pre-eternal and consubstantial and subracestial Spirit as His finger, crying out and point from heaven, openly declared and proclaimed to all that the one then being baptized by John in the Jordan was His beloved Son, while at the same time manifesting His unity with Him.” (St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 60.15). St. John Chrysostom also emphasizes that the Gospels state the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descends upon us so that we can ascend with Christ and the Spirit to the Father in Heaven. For the first time since the fall of mankind, the Heavens were opened to us.

2) The angels on the right side are waiting to attend and dress him after the baptism is over.

3) St. John the Baptist, while baptizing Jesus is usually turned away or looking at the Spirit descending upon Christ. This signifies that Theophany is about elevating Jesus Christ. If this were an Olympic race, it would be as if the Old Testament (John the Baptist and all before him) were passing the baton to the New Testament (Jesus Christ and all of the saints).

4) There is an axe near John the Baptist, which reflects his warning that our lives must bear the fruit of the Spirit or else we will be removed. We cannot get comfortable or spiritually lazy.

5) Jesus is not submerged in the water, for creation was baptized in Him, not vice versa.

6) Lastly, the strange little creatures riding fish at the bottom represent the Jordan River and the Sea, both fleeing at the sight of something much bigger and greater than themselves entering the water. As the Psalms say:

Psalm 73:14 – *Thou did establish the sea by Thy might, Thou did break the heads of the dragons in the water. (This verse is also linked to Theophany by the priest’s prayer – see page 356 in the Festal Menaion)*

Psalm 76:15 – *The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee and were afraid; the abysses were troubled.*

Psalm 113:3 – *The sea beheld and fled, [the River] Jordan turned back.*