



Do not be ashamed to enter again into the Church. Be ashamed when you sin. Do not be ashamed when you repent. Pay attention to what the devil did to you. These are two things: sin and repentance. Sin is a wound; repentance is a medicine. Just as there are for the body wounds and medicines, so for the soul are sins and repentance. However, sin has the shame and repentance possesses the courage.

Saint John Chrysostom

**10 January 2016 is the
Sunday after Theophany**

Matins Gospel: John 21:1-14

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross;
Thou didst open Paradise to the thief;
Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

Apolytikion of the Sunday after Theophany:

At Your Baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed, for the Father's voice bore witness to You, calling You His 'beloved Son,' and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, Who appeared and enlightened the world, glory to You!

Seasonal Kontakion:

You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us. With fuller understanding we sing to You: "You came, You were made manifest, the unapproachable light."

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 11:27-30
Theodosius the Cenobiarch; Vitalis of Gaza

Tuesday: Acts 18:22-28; John 10:39-42
Martyr Tatiana; Martyr Mertios

Wednesday: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Luke 20:1-8
The Holy Martyrs Hermylus and Stratonikus; Maximos the Righteous

Thursday: Acts 2:38-43; Luke 4:1-15
Apodosis of Epiphany; Agnes the Virgin-martyr

Friday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Luke 12:32-40
John the Hut-Dweller; Paul of Thebes; Pansophios the Martyr

Saturday: 12:1-11; John 21:14-25
Veneration of the Chains of Ap. Peter; Righteous Makarios of Kalogeras



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

10 January 2016

The Light of the World

Today, on the Sunday after Theophany, we hear how, after His baptism in the River Jordan and the arrest of Saint John the Baptist, Jesus Christ withdrew to Galilee where He began His preaching ministry. Saint Matthew tells us that this was to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah who proclaimed that those living in darkness had seen a great light.

The feast of Theophany is a feast of the Light. By coming among us in His Nativity, the light of Jesus Christ has entered into the darkness of our world, and at His Baptism in the Jordan, this light was publicly manifested to all the world. Now we see how this light begins to spread out, first in Galilee, but eventually the Light of Christ will spread, little by little, throughout the whole world.

Like Saint John the Baptist, Jesus called people to repentance, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand." Saint John had preached that the Kingdom was coming, but now, with the coming of Christ, the Kingdom is "at hand," for it is the presence of Jesus Christ that makes the Kingdom present. But it is only beginning and must continue to grow until it exists in all its fullness.

We enter the Kingdom of Heaven through repentance, a repentance that is not a once-off event, but a process that must continue throughout our lives. However, while repentance involves turning away from sin, it is not a gloomy, negative discipline, but rather a joyful turning towards God. For a life of repentance involves choosing that which truly satisfies our deepest longings; and as we align our own wills with the Will of God, we discover true freedom and a joy that nothing can surpass.



The "great light" is Christ our Lord and the brightness of the Gospel preaching.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

The Icon of the Theophany of the Lord

In the icon of the Baptism of Christ, which we celebrated on Wednesday, we see the Church's understanding of this great event, for an icon reflects the Church's faith and invites us to enter into that faith in a deeper way.

This icon reveals two fundamental mysteries. Firstly, there is the revelation of the Holy Trinity who reveals Himself on this day – through the voice of the Father and through the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ in the form of a dove. Secondly, there is the revelation of the mystery of baptism, through which we and all creation are purified and renewed.



We see these mysteries expressed in the icon. At the top, there is a segment of a circle which represents the heavens which had been closed by the sin of Adam, but which are now opened by Christ. This signifies the presence of God, and we see rays of light that shine upon the Saviour, together with the dove which represents the Holy Spirit who comes to rest on Him. For the Fathers of the Church, the dove is a reminder of the dove that had heralded the end of the flood. (Genesis 8:11-12)

Like the icon of the Nativity, the events of this icon are situated in the desert, representing the desert of our estrangement from God. And, just as His Nativity was situated in a cave, so too Christ is shown here in the river which forms a cave around Him, pointing to the darkness of our world and to the tomb and the depths of hell into which He will descend in order to save us.

This watery tomb evokes the imagery of water found in the Old Testament. On the one hand, water is a symbol of chaos, death and destruction, as seen in the Flood. But this imagery is also used to express our longing for the Living Water which is our longing for Christ Himself. In the icon of the Baptism of Christ, we often see two small figures in the water. The one is a man who represents the Jordan River that the Prophet Elisha turned back with his mantel, prefiguring our own baptism. And the other is a woman who represents the sea and refers to that other prefiguration of Baptism, namely the crossing of the Red Sea.

The icon shows Christ covered by the water, but He is shown as standing or walking in order to show that He is in control. He blesses the waters of the Jordan, sanctifying them by His immersion, and from then on the water becomes an image not of death, but of new life.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

Today the Church commemorates Saint Gregory of Nyssa, one of the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers who contributed so much to the Church's understanding of her faith, to her struggles against heresy, and to the development of her spiritual life.

Saint Gregory was born into an illustrious Christian family. His grandparents had lost lands when the Church was still persecuted and his parents, Saint Basil the Elder and Saint Emmelia, had brought him up in an atmosphere of piety. Both his brother, Saint Basil the Great, and his sister, Saint Macrina the Younger, were pioneers in the monastic life.



Despite being a devout Christian, and having been tonsured as a reader, Saint Gregory initially followed in his father's footsteps by embarking on career in rhetoric. However, Saint Basil soon engaged his help in the challenges that the Church was facing. This was a time when the Church's faith, which had been defined at the Council of Nicaea in 325, was once again coming under attack by the Arians. When Basil became Archbishop of Caesarea in 370, he appointed Gregory as Bishop of Nyssa to support the Orthodox cause.

Saint Gregory endured many struggles as bishop, but his work, especially his writings against the Arians in which he outlined the Church's true faith, ensured that the Orthodoxy triumphed once more at the Council of Constantinople in 381, which he attended. After the council, he was asked to travel to Palestine and Arabia to settle troubles there and ensure that people were taught the true faith.

Once peace returned to the Church, Saint Gregory was able to devote himself to the spiritual life and to directing the monasteries founded by Saint Basil. In this period, he wrote treatises, such as the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* and *The Life of Moses*, which were to have a profound influence on the Christian understanding of the spiritual life in the centuries to come. His teaching was rooted in the Church's understanding that human beings are created in God's image and reflect His freedom. Although we have misused this freedom, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ means that we can be restored to our original state and enter into a renewed communion with God. Joined by baptism to the Body of Christ, the presence of the Lord can grow ever more and more within us if we exercise the holy virtues and participate in the sacraments. Through this, we can make continual progress to union with God.



When iron is stripped of rust by a whetstone, what once was dull itself shines as it faces the sun and gives forth beams and shafts of light. So also, when the inner human being, which is what the Lord calls "the heart," has wiped off the rusty filth that has spread by evil decay over its form, it will again recover its likeness to its model and be good. What is like the good is surely good.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa