



Ο ΔΙΟΣ

ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ
Ο ΚΟΙΝΟΒΙΤΗΣ

Ἡ ΠΑΡΕΜΑΡΤΙΑ
ΜΗΤΕ ΕΣΤΙ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΡΝΕΙΑΣ
ΚΑΙ ΟΥΚ ΕΒΑ
ΤΟΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΟ
ΔΥΝΑΤΑΙ
ΕΞΗΓΕΙΝ
ΤΙΣΟΣΗΣ.

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Theophany/Baptism of Christ

January 6, 2008

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Father John Cmur; Deacon Kenneth E. Ellis and
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this day's feast of Theophany as well as this past week's feast of the Circumcision and St. Basil the Great. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Those of our faithful who would like to have their homes blessed are asked to speak to Father as soon as possible.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week-end: Tithe Offering, \$██████, Candles, \$██████, Kitchen, \$██████; Pennies From Heaven, \$██████, Candy Sales, \$██████; Nativity of our Lord, \$██████, Christian Fellowship, \$██████, Food Coupons, \$██████, Web Site, \$██████, Bulletin, \$██████, for a total of \$██████. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 38 adults and 14 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Bob Gorbich, Helen Karpiak, Pani Lucas, Paul Szmajda, Father Lucas, Pani Bulezta.

+++ The offering envelopes for the new year are available in the vestibule. Please take them in the spirit they are offered and allow them to be a sign of love and devotion to the Lord and our parish.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$██████ from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish!

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$██████. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$██████ on this project to date!

+++ The weekly sponsor list for Christian Fellowship Food for this year is available to be filled out on the table in the kitchen. We appeal to **ALL** our parishioners to participate, not just a few, so that it is equitable and the responsibility shared by **ALL**.

+++ This Saturday we will have our January Pirohi Sale. Preparations will be made at 8:00 AM on Thursday. Helping hands are needed as well as orders. The Order Sheet is on the table in the kitchen.

+++ We continue to be in need of Web Site donor-sponsors. The amount is \$25.00 per month. Please see Father as soon as possible. Please use the sign up sheet on the bulletin board in the kitchen.

+++ The sign up sheet for bulletin sponsors is posted on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please show your gratitude for the richness of learning material we receive each week by sponsoring a month.

+++ Next Sunday the children of our Jesus School will remove the holyday decorations from the church after their classes.

+++ May all glory, adoration, worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!

Web Site Address

Parish: www.stpaul-freehold.com

Father's address: fatherbob@stpaul-freehold.com



God Is Awesome

Who is like you among the gods, O Lord, Who is like you, magnificent in holiness? O terrible in renown, worker of wonders, when you stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them! In your mercy you led the people you redeemed; in your strength you guided them to your holy dwelling Exodus 15: 11 – 13.

The Almighty, we cannot discover him; pre-eminent in power and judgment; his great justice owes no one an accounting. Therefore men revere him, though none can see him, however wise their hearts Job 37: 23, 24.

All heaven will praise your miracles, Lord, myriads of angels will praise your faithfulness. For who in all of heaven can compare with the Lord? What mightiest angel is anything like the Lord? The highest angelic powers stand in awe of God. He is far more awesome than those who surround his throne Psalms 89: 5 – 7.

I will mediate on the glorious splendor of your majesty and in your wondrous works. Men shall speak of the might of your awesome acts and I will declare your greatness Psalms 145: 5, 6.

Out of the north he comes in golden splendor; God comes in awesome majesty Job 37: 22.

I prayed: "O lord, God of heaven, great and awesome God, you who preserve your covenant of mercy toward those who love and keep your commandments, may your ear be attentive and your eyes open to heed the prayer which I, your servant now offer in your presence day and night..." Nehemiah 1: 5, 6.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

When the Forerunner saw Him Who is our enlightenment, Who enlightens every man coming to be baptized, his heart rejoiced and his hand trembled. He pointed Him out to the people and said: "This is the Saviour of Israel Who delivered us from corruption!" O Christ, God, O sinless Lord, glory be to You! Vesper Hymn, Feast of Theophany.

O Saviour, the armies of angels trembled when they saw You baptized by Your servant, and the Holy Spirit bearing witness by coming down, and when they heard the Father's voice speaking from heaven: "This One upon Whom the Forerunner lays his hands is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." O Christ God, Glory, to You! Vesper Hymn, Feast of Theophany.

When the Jordan River received You, O Fountainhead, the Consoler came down in the form of a dove. Behold the marvel: the One Who drew the curve of heaven bows His head to the Forerunner, to the one made of clay who cries out to His Master: "Why do You order me to do things beyond my worth? It is I who need to be baptized by You!" O Christ God, O sinless One, glory be to You! Vesper Hymn, Feast of Theophany.

O Lord, when John saw You coming to him at the Jordan River, he cried out: "How do You, O Lord, Who have no stain, come to me Your servant? In whose name shall I baptize You? In the name of the Father You possess in Yourself? In the name of the Son while You are the very Son in the flesh? In the name of the Holy Spirit Whom You grant to the faithful with the breath of Your mouth?" O God made manifest, have mercy on us! Vesper Hymn, Feast of Theophany.

The waters have seen You! O Lord, when the waters saw You, they trembled, for the very Cherubim do not dare to look upon Your glory, nor can the Seraphim rest their eyes upon You. They stand in fear before You, some on guard; others glorifying Your might. Together with them, we proclaim Your praise, O merciful One and say: O God become manifest for us, have mercy on us! Vesper Hymn, Feast of Theophany.

Celebration of the Feast of Theophany

with the traditional

Blessing of Water and the Blessing of Homes

One of the most impressive ceremonies of the Orthodox Church is the solemn blessing of water on the feast of Theophany commemorating Christ's Baptism in the river Jordan. Theophany, one of the most ancient and venerable festivities originated in Palestine where it was celebrated with a vigil and special services on the spot where, according to Christian tradition, our Lord was actually baptized. St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Pontus (d. about 270), is the first witness to present the glorious feast with its splendor to us as the "salutary proclamation of Christ's baptism" in his homily on Christ's Baptism.

That Theophany was already established as a solemn feast in the Orthodox Church in the middle of the fourth century is proclaimed in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, "Permit Theophany, in which the Lord manifested to us His own divinity, be to you the most honored feast and let it be celebrated on the sixth day of January,"

The Greek word *Theophania* means manifestation of God and applied Christians to the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and specifically the manifestation of the second Person of the Holy Trinity as He actually is: not only purely and totally human, but likewise equally divine. St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) in his *Theophany Homily* elucidates for our benefit: "Why do we call this day Theophany? Because Jesus Christ manifested himself to all people, not when He was born, but, rather when he was baptized. Until that time He was unknown to the people as testified by St. John the Baptist, saying: 'There stands among you one, whom you do not know!'" John 1: 26."

In contrast to the western appellation for this feast, Epiphany, which simply means manifestation, the true, easily understandable and ancient feast day designation, Theophany,

more clearly reflects the manifestation of the Blessed Trinity at Christ's Baptism as poetically described in the troparion for the holyday, "At your baptism in the Jordan..."

The solemn baptism of catechumens was also administered in the ancient Church on the eve of Theophany since the fourth century, when the openly public life of the Church began. The early Fathers of the Church referred to this as the Mystery of Illumination or Enlightenment. Thus Theophany was also called the Feast of Lights or the Day of Illumination according to the sermonology sources of St. Gregory Nazianzen. Following this, our liturgical books still call the Sunday before Theophany the Sunday prior to the Illumination and the Sunday after Theophany, the Sunday after the Illumination. St. Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 447), gives us the following explanation: "Christ manifested himself to the world; He filled it with the light and joy of purity and truth; He sanctified water and diffused His light in the souls of men."

Since the solemn blessing of water takes place on this glorious feast, it is also known as the Feast of Water Blessing. The solemn blessing of water, in commemoration, of Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River is the main feature of this feast day. St. Gregory the Wonderworker, in a homily commented, "The Lord Who has come into the Jordan River, through its streams transmitted sanctification to all streams of flowing water." And precisely, in our liturgical books, the blessing of water is referred to as the Blessing of the Jordan, since it is considered a rewitnessing of Christ's immersion in the water of salvation as in Baptism. By His Baptism in the Jordan, our Saviour imparted to water a mystical power of sanctification, as "a sign of heavenly streams" of divine grace, which we learn from the witness of St. Gregory Nazianzen.

St. Basil the Great (d. 379) affirms that the blessing of water comes to us as a "mystical tradition" in his homily on the Holy Spirit and that through the prayer and blessing of the priestly celebrant, receives "a quickening power of the Holy Spirit". In a similar homily on the power of the Holy Spirit, St. Ambrose (d. 397) also taught that it was the Holy Spirit Who "consecrates the water through the invocative prayer of the celebrating priest." Consequently, in the prayer for the blessing of water we also find the *epiclesis*, the prayer of invocation for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

The oldest prayer for the blessing of water is preserved for us in the *Euchologion of Serapion* (d. after 362), the Bishop of Thmuis in lower Egypt. It is also certain that the prayer itself dates

back well before his time and is also witness to the early practice of the apostolic Church. *The Apostolic Constitutions* attribute the authorship of the first prayer for the blessing of water to St. Matthias the Apostle.

According to Armenian sources, the original author of our ritual of the Solemn Blessing of Water was St. Basil the Great who composed it during his visit to Jerusalem in 377. This ritual was probably used at Antioch in 387 when St. John Chrysostom delivered his homily on the Baptism of Christ, saying, "This is the day on which Christ was baptized and through His baptism sanctified the element of water. Wherefore, at midnight on this feast, all the faithful draw of the holy water and store it in their homes, because on this day, water is consecrated."

It seems that St. Basil's ritual was later revised by St. Proclus of Constantinople (434 – 447) and finally, by St. Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem who reigned from 634 – 638 and composed the introductory verses and rearranged the entire ritual according to the custom of the Alexandrian Church. For this reason, our present ritual is ascribed to him.

The *Book of Needs* contains another ritual for blessing of water called the Simple Blessing of Water. This ceremony can be taken anytime of the year and is used especially on the first day of August in commemoration of the Holy Cross and also on the occasion of pilgrimage. An example of this is the custom of blessing water at the annual pilgrimages in honor of the Protection, the Dormition and the Elevation of the Life-giving Cross.

The Solemn Blessing of Water, according to liturgical prescriptions should take place on the Eve of Theophany. However, the presently prevailing custom is to bless water on the feast day itself, following immediately after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, when the majority of parish faithful can be present. In Europe, it was custom to go in procession to the nearest stream or river and perform the ritual there. A stream of moving water symbolizes the living waters of the Jordan River where our Saviour came to be baptized by St. John the Baptist. This is described in the verses of St. Sophronius which are sung during the procession to the stream or river.

In the ritual, after incensing the water, the scriptural readings of the prophecies (Isaiah 35: 1 – 10; 55: 1 – 13; 12: 3 – 6), the epistle (1 Corinthians 10: 1 -40 and the gospel (Mark 1: 9 – 11)

are taken. In his gospel, St. Mark informs us that as our Lord Jesus Christ was coming out of the river, the “heavens opened and the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. And a voice came from heaven saying: ‘You are my beloved Son and my favor rests on you’” The lighted triple candle of the celebrant during the gospel narrative is a reminder of that mystical manifestation of the Blessed Trinity at the baptism of Christ.

The intonation of the Litany of Peace into which special petitions are inserted, follows. In these petitions, we implore God to sanctify the water by the “descent of the Holy Spirit” in order that it may bring to us the blessing of the Jordan,” defend us against the snares of the devil, heal our spiritual and physical weaknesses, sanctify our homes and fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit. The litany ends with the long prayer of consecration of water, now ascribed to St. Sophronius, entitled *Poem or Hymn of Consecration*. This prayer is indeed a poem in praise of the mysteries of Theophany and the regeneration of all creation through Jesus Christ.

During this prayer, when the priestly celebrant comes to the profound words, “Great are You, O Lord and wonderful are your works and our words are insufficient to praise your wonders,” he blesses the water with the burning triple candle, by dipping it into the water while simultaneously praying the words. This he does three times, repeating the prayer and dipping in one of the three candles each time. This is done in commemoration of our Lord’s baptism when He, the Son of God, the “True Light” of the world” John 1: 9, stepped down into the water of the Jordan as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” John 1: 29, in order to wash them away through baptism. The Greek word *baptism*, originally meant a dipping in water, an actual immersion, a burial as it were, in the depths of the water. The ceremony of immersion of the candle is done three times for Baptism is offered us “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28: 19. This reminds us of our own personal baptism and our commitment to Christ our Lord.

Continuing the prayer, the priestly celebrant repeats the words, “Therefore, You, O Loving King, come to us also now through the descent of the Holy Spirit and sanctifying this water,” three times, each time breathing over the water in the form of a cross, the gesture of exorcism, purifying the water from the contamination and influence of evil powers.

Then, the priestly celebrant, continuing the prayer, makes the sign of the cross in the water three times with his fingers, each time repeating the words: “Therefore, also now, O Master,

sanctify this water by your Holy Spirit.” This liturgical gesture symbolizes the blessing of the Jordan, as though Christ Himself comes and touches the water by immersing Himself in it in order that to all who are “sprinkled with it, drink of it or wash with it,” it may bring “sanctification, healing, cleansing and blessing.”

After imparting the blessing of peace to the faithful, the priestly celebrant immerses the holy cross, generally a wooden one, into the water three times and each time the troparion of the feast is intoned. This final part of the ceremony symbolizes the manifestation of the Holy Trinity as Jesus Christ, the second Person, stepped out of the water, described in a poetic way by the feast day theme song.

Following this, the concluding verse, “Let us, the faithful sing...” is chanted by the people while the celebrant blesses and sprinkles the altar and walls of the entire church with the freshly sanctified water. When the priest returns, the faithful come forward to venerate the holy cross and to be sprinkled with the newly sanctified water, conferring upon them the blessing of the Lord as a token of their redemption. During the veneration of the cross, the faithful continue to sing the troparion and kontakion of the feast and fill their containers with the newly blessed water to take to their homes for daily domestic use. It is custom among the faithful to drink of this holy water for the “purification of their souls and bodies and as a cure of their weaknesses.” This custom is ancient and comes to us with the ritual itself. The taking of the holy water to their homes is to have in it a font of continued blessings and protection against all evil.

Among the various petitions mentioned in the ceremony during the blessing of water is the sanctification of homes. With this the Church imposes a responsibility and obligation upon its priests to bless the homes of the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care at the beginning of the new year. Theologically speaking, the blessing of homes constitutes an invocative blessing, meaning that by his prayer and by the sprinkling of the holy water the priest invokes God’s protection on the home and those living in it. The prayer itself best explains its meaning.

As our souls, so also are homes become tainted by the sins of those living in them and, consequently, lose God’s protective embrace. Every year, then at the feast of Theophany, they should be blessed again to secure for them God’s blessing and to invoke His protection. Just as the faithful cleanse their soul of sin at least once a year, and the church is blessed with the

newly sanctified water every year, so should the homes, the miniature churches, of the faithful be yearly blessed to ask God's blessings and protection on them and its inhabitants.

In the very practical realm, as we renew the insurance on our home every year, so we should renew our insurance of God's protection and His blessing which is of greater importance and more effective. As we welcome our priest during the holy season of Theophany to bless our home, let us be mindful that he brings to us the "blessing of the Jordan," and that unless God protects and blesses our home, "we labor in vain" Psalms 127: 1.

Troparion

At your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was revealed, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You by calling you His beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the certainty of these words.

Kontakion

You have revealed yourself today to the world and your light, O Lord, has shined upon those who recognizing You, cry out, You have come and revealed yourself O Inaccessible Light.

Prayer For the Blessing of Homes

O God, our True Light and Saviour, You consented to be baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist to renew all men by the cleansing water of regeneration (Titus 3: 5) and to enter under the roof of Zaccheaus, bringing salvation to him and his house (Luke 19: 9), now, O Lord, also protect all those who dwell in this home from all harm and injury; grant them Jordan's blessing, purification of soul and body, and good health. Hear all their supplications, which are for their salvation and life eternal.

For blessed are You, O Lord, together with your Eternal Father and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.



If we
live
according
to the way
Christ
challenges us
in the life of
His Body,
the Church,
we will have
eternal life!

**NO
Ifs,
Ands,
OR
Buts
PERIOD!**

Into the Unknown

(The Magi) went their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was
Matthew 2: 9.

A husband and wife report they have been unemployed for some three months, so the wife had to find a part-time job. Even so, they are still falling behind each week. Their indebtedness seems to be inevitably accumulating. She continually asks the Lord to provide steady work for her husband. Meanwhile, she agonizes over how long she will have to wait.

But while teaching her catechetical class a few Sundays ago, she learned about the tradition which says the wise men who visited the young Jesus spent about two years following the star to Bethlehem. What astounding faith these men were possessed of! Did they have any idea of what lay ahead of them when they began their travels? Did they know how long it would take and what they would find at the end of their adventuresome trek? The length of their sojourn and the magnitude of their discovery make any family's unemployment journey into unknown territory seem far less serious by comparison.

Living for months on end on such small income is not easy and the couple do not know where they are headed. Perhaps the husband may have to change occupations, at least temporarily. But if the Magi could cling to their faith for at least two long years while following a compelling brilliant star in the heavens, then families called by the Lord through difficulty to survive, can also hold on tightly to faith commitment, secure in the belief that God is guiding them toward something compellingly good.

The Magi could not have dreamed of the caustic anger they would encounter in Herod as they sought the site of the Christ Child's Birth. They never dreamed, as in simple faith they set out to find the King of the Jews, that depraved rulers would desire His innocent blood and hopefully, entangle them in the bizarre plot.

As we realize our journey in this life is similar to that of the Wise Men because we travel many times not knowing where our God will lead us, but surely confident that He is with us every step of the way. We know God will lead if we are faith-filled enough to follow!

WATER

In the very beginning, our God created water as a vital element in man's life. *Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created; He established them forever and ever; He gave them a duty which shall not pass away* Psalms 148: 4 - 6. Water covered and embraced the entire earth. It is vital and necessary for the physical, temporal life of man as well as his spiritual, God-devoted life.

It is baptismal water that leads us to paradise. The sacramental Mysteries of Initiation show us the way. *You know the way that leads where I go* John 14: 4. We see yet in the Old Covenant that Elisha the Prophet purifies bad water by praying, *Thus says the Lord, I have purified this water. Never again shall death or miscarriage spring from it* 2 Kings 2: 2: 21.

Thus we see heaven's loving protection in sanctified water, that is water that is solely dedicated to the glorification of our God and for his praise and his sublime purpose. From Jacob's well in his message to the woman of Samaria, we also welcome the words of our Saviour. *Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him, will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him, leaping up to provide eternal life* John 4: 14.

Likewise, after the example of that woman say, *Give me this water, so that I shall not grow thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water* John 4: 15.

So on this glorious feast, we sanctify water for the salvation of our souls because as the Lord teaches the Samaritans who were separated and distanced from the Old Covenant Church, *You worship what you do not understand, while we understand what we worship* John 4: 22.

If the Lord's actual physical presence in the Jordan River water changes it, restores it to its original purpose of being a blessing for man, makes it holy, sanctifies it, we want that holiness and sanctification for ourselves. We want the benefits of God's presence in the water.

Did You Know That ...

...your discontents should be your secrets because if the world knows then it will despise you and increase them?

...a true friend is the best possession?

...there are no gains without pains?

...fools make feasts while wise men enjoy them?

...a man without dignity has need of great merit in its place?

...you may be too cunning for one, but not for all?

...creditors are a superstitious sect; they are great observers of days and times?

...laziness and silence are a fool's virtues?

...ceremony is not civility, nor civility ceremony?

...a brother may not be a friend, but a friend will always be a brother?

...great spenders are bad lenders?

...many complain of their memory, but none of their judgment?

...a full belly is the mother of varied evils?

...he who multiplies riches, multiplies worries?

...those things which hurt us can instruct us?

...oftentimes a soft tongue may strike hard?

...it is possible to talk too much even on the best and most popular of subjects?

...war brings scars?

THE VENERABLE THEODOSIUS: A CHAMPION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

Many of us set goals for ourselves and attempt to chart a course that we would like our life to follow. Often, however, God has other plans for us! Such was the case with the Venerable Theodosius of Cappadocia. Theodosius lived in the 5th century, and from the early days of his youth, was determined to serve the Lord in some manner. He longed to live a solitary life, settling in a cave outside of Palestine where, according to Sacred Tradition, the Wise Men had spent the night on their way to Bethlehem to worship the new-born King. Soon others sought him out, though, hoping to learn from this man of prayer and asceticism, and the cave could no longer accommodate those who wished to be guided by him. Theodosius prayed that the Lord would help him find a location to house his followers. Taking a censer with charcoal and incense, the monk went out into the desert. At a certain spot, the charcoal ignited on its own! This was where Theodosius founded his monastery, which followed a strict rule of communal living. All possessions were held in common for the entire monastic community - everything that the monks did throughout the course of a day - work, prayer, fasting, keeping vigil - was done together.

Theodosius was known for his charitable deeds. He built a home for taking in strangers, as well as infirmaries for monks and laymen. Feeding the hungry and needy was always a priority at his monastery. Seeing that the 700 monks at his monastery were from various ethnic backgrounds, Theodosius arranged for services at the monastery church to be celebrated in many different languages. The Venerable Theodosius fell asleep in the Lord in 529 A.D. at the advanced age of 105.

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