

“When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest; for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son. And the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ our God, Who hast appeared and hast enlightened the world, glory be to Thee.”



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Theophany; Baptism of Christ

January 6, 2013

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; 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

+++ Festal anointing today on the occasion of this past week's feast of the Circumcision and today's holyday of Christ's Baptism and the Manifestation of the Holy Trinity. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Debra and Michael.

+++ We do thank the special parish children who so devotedly set up and decorated the Jesse Tree prior to the Nativity holyday. Our blessings are upon you, faithful children!

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ 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 December 23: Tithing Offering, \$729.00; Candles, \$158.00; Nativity of our Lord, \$206.00; Kitchen, \$5506.00 Food Coupons, \$400.00; Special Gift, \$2,000.00, for a total of \$8999.00. Received December 25: Offering, \$122.00; Nativity of our Lord, \$1252.00; Candles, \$48.00; Food Coupons, \$100.00; Special Gift, \$5000.00, for a total of \$6522.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 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: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Eleni Pallas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Marilyn Korba, Eleanor Korba, Michael George, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.

+++ 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 **\$1694.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see 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 \$5550.00 on this project to date!

+++ **The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ May all glory, adoration and 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!

+++ **This coming Sunday is the solemn feast of Theophany, the Baptism of our Lord and the manifestation of the Holy Trinity. Water will be solemnly blessed and distributed after the Divine Liturgy. Those who would like their homes blessed are asked to advise Father as soon as possible.**



Walking In Love

A new commandment I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another John 13: 34, 35.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you 1 Thessalonians 3: 12.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my father's commands and remain in his love John 15: 9, 10.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity Colossians 3: 12 - 14.

He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends Proverbs 17: 9.

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness 1 Timothy 6: 11.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves Romans 12: 9, 10.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love Galatians 5: 13.

God Talk

What precisely is God's will for me? Our Lord provides us with important insight. "Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me" Mark 3:35. Certainly our God does not dramatically and specifically send angels with messages. Yet, we all hear a great deal from our God. He does speak to us within the inner recesses of our heart and conscience. It might be something we have read in a spiritual publication such as this bulletin, or even in the daily newspaper that we can relate to our lives and our circumstances which will touch a sensitive point and produce an awareness of God's will for us. It may be an encounter with another person to whom we might compare ourselves and recognize a similarity and how they successfully encountered it and overcame a defect of character. It may challenge us to seek after the grace of the Lord and make a serious endeavor to correct our shortcomings. It may be during a particular moment during the Divine Liturgy, a special message in the homily or sermon which will trigger a positive response and the working of the Holy Spirit will initiate a new beginning for us. It could be a simple innocent plaque in a craft shop which draws our attention to an important message and direction which will bring about a conversion. In some instances it might be a line in a play or a television show, or perhaps the words of a song on the radio. God does work in mysterious ways. And it could also be communicated to us from the lips of our parents or siblings. It can have the rumbling effect of producing change that is serious and long term and affects the destiny of our soul. Sometimes it is simply a casual remark someone interjects that sets us to thinking seriously and sincerely about ourselves and our status in the sight of our Creator. Often, it may be something that we may be thinking and attributing to someone else, which we finally turn around and apply to ourselves. "Why doesn't she or he use their talents for God?" might suddenly become "Why don't I utilize what God has given me to better myself?" "How can I take this situation and apply it to myself so that God is glorified by my efforts?" "Am I utilizing all the advantages our Creator has endowed me with to become what He intended?"

Even though God speaks in whispers, and it takes skill to hear and discern His voice amid the clamor of our society and all its incessant noises, amid the clatter of words flowing through our brains. This is precisely why at the end of each day we should close our eyes and shut our ears down to the computer in our head and permit God to fine tune our spiritual antennae to the right frequency. There is no question our God is speaking to us, but are we wise, avid and good listeners?

AT YOUR BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN, O LORD, WORSHIP OF THE TRINITY WAS REVEALED!
AND 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!

Troparion of the Feast

Standing submissively immersed in the waters of the River Jordan, our Lord is baptized at His own request by St. John the Baptist. The water reminds the believer to recall the safe crossing of the Red Sea by God's chosen people and their entrance into the Promised Land forty years later across the same Jordan River.

In some icons, two smaller figures in the water many times personify the river itself, one depicted as a male with his back towards the Saviour, indicating the change in water flow after Christ's Baptism, alluding to the Old Testament: "The sea beheld and fled; Jordan turned back" Psalm 114: 4. A feminine figure signifies the sea and refers to the prefiguring of the sacramental Mystery of Baptism in the crossing of the Red Sea which led to freedom and redemption. It is also a reminder of Noah and his chosen family being delivered from the sinfulness of man in the world and the subsequent drowning of sin at the time of the flood. These are but some of the positive values of the natural element of water with which man has been gifted. He is restored as master of creation.

God's manifestation in His own essential nature is movingly and literally depicted with Christ the Son of God shown in the very center of the astounding scene, as the hands of John the Baptist open above Him, showing God's grace is inevitably dispensed and imparted through others in the life of His Body, our Church. The skies of heaven open and the hand of God the Father extends benevolently towards earth, evidencing His intimate unity with the second Person of the Holy Trinity and His definite concern for creation. In the ray of light extending to Christ, a dove is encircled in a halo signifying God the Holy Spirit. Thus the All-Holy Trinity is openly and lovingly revealed for all mankind. God shows Himself for what He is. Before, man could not absorb in his limited intellectual ability the overwhelmingly profound mystery of One God in Three Divine Persons. Now, finally, the time has come that man can grasp, can understand, can believe and make His own this profound truthful mystery. He can respond to this truth even though He is overwhelmed that three Divine Persons in one God are allied in the salvation of mankind and desire the good of his soul and body. Man need not

wait any longer because salvation is present and available to all who desire to seriously follow the Saviour.

Iconography depicts the entire mystery revealed as found in the gospels of SS. Mark and Matthew with the resounding and resonating voice of the Eternal Father reverberating over the water: "This is my beloved Son, My favor rests on him" Matthew 3: 17; Mark 1: 11.

Shown at various times with a loin cloth enveloping the Saviour or without, both have meaningful significance. Earliest icons depicted the Lord wearing no clothing. Thus, the humanity of Christ was illustrated and emphasized, indicating how Christ strips His body of clothing in the same manner as He empties Himself of divinity for the sake of our salvation by accepting the inevitable death on the Cross. A hymn for the feast day says it well: "He strips Himself Who clothes the heavens with clouds" Vesper Hymn, Feast of Theophany. In the instance of a loin cloth, we are reminded of the white baptismal garment that every believer receives which signifies our being clothed with the grace of the Resurrection, the new garment of faith commitment after being baptized into the His death. After His baptism, Christ is covered with a loin cloth, thereby covering the nakedness of Adam in paradise and with him the whole of mankind with a garment of glory, brilliance and incorruptibility which are the results of this august sacramental Mystery. Being baptized and forgiven and grafted onto

Christ, man is no longer ashamed to appear in the presence of God. He is restored to his original destiny.

The icon alludes to the future in time with Christ on the Cross. Baptism for believers is our death to sin, for as we die, we are submerged in the water and rise again to new life in the Resurrection. Christ is here shown dying to our sins and rising to new Resurrection life for us.

Angels are shown ministering, serving and witnessing this extraordinary event. They bear linens to dry and clothe Him. Curiously, in both gospel accounts angels are not mentioned serving the Lord until after His forty day period of fasting which immediately follows upon the Baptism. But they are depicted here, testifying that through our baptism, we also receive the ministering assistance of a guardian angel who assists us in diverting the attacks of the devil in our daily lives.

St. John the Baptist stands beside the Lord, sometimes with His hand above the head of the Saviour which is a liturgical gesture for the sacramental Mystery of Baptism. It is a crowning moment in the life of the Baptist and Precursor and Announcer who now will slowly fade and recede into the background as the Saviour assumes a more and more prominent role in the life and salvation of the world. The Light of the world, Jesus Christ, begins to shine ever more brightly as Scripture reveals, leading us into paradise once again.

Several profound truths are linked and associated on this feast day. Not only is the Holy Trinity manifested, but Christ's exact place in it is defined and shown. The darkness of the world in sin is exposed and revealed as well, in the repeated preaching of St. John the Baptist for repentance and conversion. The fact that redemption is at hand is shown in the person of Christ. The last Old Covenant prophet, John the Baptist, introduces the fulfillment of all the prophecies in the person of the Lord. The new and eternal kingdom is shown to begin and is here and now. Baptism personally initiates it for us.

This sacred event is appropriately described summarily in a verse from the Great Compline: "Today Christ is baptized; He emerges from the waters and uplifts the world with Him. He beholds the opening of the heavens which Adam closed for himself and his descendants. The Holy Spirit testifies to His divine nature, for He is in accord with His own. A voice is heard from the heavens, giving witness to the one Who has descended: He is the Saviour of our souls." Great Compline, Feast of Theophany.

It is for this reason blessing of individual homes of believers is vital and important. Followers of Christ desire ardently the grace and blessing of this feast and wish intimately to participate in it. They are eager to experience the healing of sacred water in their being. They desire to renew the grace of their own baptism and its continuing winning challenge in their lives.



Judith The Heroine

During times of oppression, it is essential to recall heroes so that one's own courage before God is fortified. This was the reason for the composition of the books of Daniel and Esther. The Jewish people were being persecuted by their Seleucid overlords. The very survival of the nation was at stake. It might even be interpreted by some that God had abandoned His people. To combat that attitude, these books were inspired whose paramount message was God would defend those who were faithful to Him no matter how weak they were or how great the danger. The Book of Judith is another of these inspirational texts produced during the second century before our Saviour. The scene is approximately 600 BC during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. The author makes some historical errors and it is certain this was written about the same time as those of Daniel and Esther. The plot of Judith involves an invasion of the Babylonian army. King Nebuchadnezzar sent his army to invade Judah under the command of his general Holofernes. When Holofernes heard that the Jews prepared a defense against his army, he consulted local princes to determine how strong they might be. One of them, Achior, leader of the Ammonites, warned Holofernes that the Jews could be defeated only if they had sinned against God. Holofernes ignored this warning and besieged the city of Bethulia. The Babylonians cut off the water supply to the city so that many contemplated surrender. They were strongly opposed by a young widow, Judith, who encouraged her fellow citizens to trust in God. Judith prayed to God, placing herself and her people in His care. She then went to the camp of Holofernes, feigning approval of what he was doing and promising him victory. He was infatuated with her and invited her to a meal in his tent. God protected her honor in the tent for Holofernes passed out after becoming intoxicated. She then cut off his head and took it to Bethulia as a trophy. Achior, marveling what God had done through His faithful servant Judith, was converted. The Jews of Bethulia then attacked the enemy camp, and they were totally victorious. The moral of this story is that those who trust in the Lord will never be disappointed. God will answer their prayers, maybe not always in the way they hope, but in a way that will be beneficial for the salvation of their soul.

God's Will

Believers very well know that nothing which is not God's will can come into the life of one who trusts and obeys our heavenly Father. Even our Lord affirms this assertion in His own trying circumstances. "You would have no power at all against me if it were not given you from above" John 19: 11. This fact is enough to make our life one of ceaseless thanksgiving and joy. For God's will is the one hopeful, glad, and glorious thing in the world. And it is working in His omnipotence for us all the time with nothing to prevent it if we submit to it and firmly and seriously believe in His grace ever present in us.

A saint who was passing through deep waters of affliction, wrote to a friend: "Is it not a glorious thing to know that, no difference how unjust a thing may be, or how absolutely it may seem to be from the devil, by the time it reaches us it is God's will for us, and will work for good in us? For all things work together for good to us who love God. And even in the betrayal, Christ said, "The cup which my Father gave me, shall I not drink it" John 13: 11? We do live charmed lives if we are living in the center of God's will for us. All the attacks that the devil, through others' sins, can hurl against us are not only powerless to harm us, but are turned into blessings on the way.

Christ had to die before He could rise from the grave. The best things of life come to us in wounding. Wheat is literally crushed before it can become the Eucharistic bread to spiritually nourish us. The same is true of grapes before they can purple our lips with His precious Blood. Incense must be cast upon the hot coals before its pleasant aroma is set free reminiscent then, of our prayer ascending before the throne of the Father. The ground must be broken with the sharp plough before it is ready to receive and warmly embrace the seed. It is many times the broken heart that renders our being most pleasing in the sight of our heavenly Father because all is removed from it that carries the stench of sin. Many times the sweetest joys of life are the fruits of our sorrow. Human nature seems to need suffering to fit it for being a blessing to the world. It was only after betraying the Lord that Peter had the eagerness to forgive other sinners. All that appears in our lives which we incorrectly judge to be punishment is many times simply a redirective effort on the part of a loving Father to teach us the error of our ways. When no other means is available to place our firm footing once again on the road to salvation, He does permit sorrow and difficulty so that we might come to our senses.

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.

Christianity Under Siege

Commentary by Patrick Buchanan

The threat is real in this nation and around the world. For two millennia, the birth of Christ has been seen as the greatest event in world history. The moment Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, God became man and eternal salvation became possible.

This date has been the separation point of mankind's time on earth, with B.C. designating the era before Christ, and A.D. , *anno domini*, in the year of the Lord, the years after. And how, stands Christianity today?

"Christianity is in danger of being wiped out in the biblical heartlands," says the British think tank Civitas.

In Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia and Nigeria, Christians face persecution and pogroms. In Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan, conversion is a capital offense. In a century, two-thirds of all Christians have vanished from the Islamic world.

In China, Christianity is seen as a subversive ideology of the West to undermine the regime.

In the past century, all the Western empires have vanished. All of their armies and navies have melted away. All have lost their Christian faith. All have seen their birthrates plummet. All their nations are aging, shrinking and dying; all are witnessing invasions from formerly subject peoples and lands.

In America, too, the decline of Christianity proceeds unabated.

While conservatives believe that culture determines politics, liberals understand politics can change culture.

The systematic purging of Christian teachings and symbols from our public schools and public square has produced a growing population – 20 per cent of the nation, 30 per cent of the young – who answer “none” when asked about their religious beliefs and affiliation.

In the lead essay in the Book Review of Sunday’s New York Times, Paul Elie writes of our “post-Christian” fiction, where writers with “Christian conviction,” like Walker Percy and Flannery O’Connor are a lost tribe.

“Where has the novel of belief gone?” he asks.

Americans understand why Mao’s atheist heirs who have lost their Marxist-Leninist faith and militant Islamists fear and detest the rival belief system of Christianity. But do they understand the animus that lies behind the assault on their faith here at home?

In a recent issue of *New Oxford Review*, Andrew Seddon (The New Atheism; All the Rage”) describes a “Reason Rally” in Washington D.C., a “coming out” event sponsored by atheist groups. Among the speakers was Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, who claims that “faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no arguments.”

Christians have been infected by a “God virus.” Dawkins says. They are no longer rational beings. Atheists should treat them with derisory contempt. “Mock them!” Dawkins shouted. “Ridicule them in public!”

In *The End of Faith*, atheist Sam Harris wrote that “...some propositions are so dangerous that it may even be ethical to kill people.”

“Since the New Atheists believe that religion is evil, notes Seddon, “that it ‘poisons everything,’ in Christopher Hutchins’ words, it does not take much effort to see that Harris is referring to religions and the people who follow them.”

Now since atheists are still badly outnumbered in America and less well armed than the God-and Country boys, and atheists believe this is the only life they have, atheist suggestions to “kill people” of Christian belief is probably a threat Christians need not take too seriously at the present time.

With reference to Dawkins’ view that the Christian faith “requires no justification and brooks no arguments,” Seddon makes a salient point.

While undeniable that Christianity entails a belief in the supernatural, the miraculous – God became man that first Christmas, Christ raised people from the dead, rose himself on the first Easter Sunday and ascended into heaven 40 days later – consider what Atheists believe.

They believe that something came out of nothing, that reason came from irrationality, that a complex universe and natural order came out of randomness and chaos, that consciousness came from non-consciousness and that life emerges from non-life. This is a bridge too far to the Christian for whom faith and reason tell him that for all of this to have been created from nothing is absurd, it presupposes a Creator.

Hutchins insists, “Our belief is not a belief.”

Nonsense. Atheism requires a belief in the unbelievable.

Christians believe Christ could raise people from the dead because He is God. That is faith. Atheists believe life came out of non-life. That, too, is faith. They believe in the miraculous but cannot identify, produce or describe the miracle worker.

At this Christmas season, pray for Hutchens, Harris, Dawkins and the other lost souls at that Reason Rally.

Father's note: Genuinely live your faith; it is because Orthodoxy has failed to provide the world with a compelling example of genuine faith in practice that we have this problem in our nation and in the world, Atheism is a challenge to believers to be authentic.





Birthday
Wishes!

We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

January 5 Stephen Demyan
January 11 Pani Marlene Lucas
January 12 Christopher Pashos
January 17 Ann Camp

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!

THEOPHANY: THE TRINITY REVEALED

There are many aspects to the celebration of the Feast Day of Theophany in our Holy Church. It is the day when Christ was baptized in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist before embarking on His Divine Mission of bringing salvation to mankind. On Theophany, the Great Blessing of Water is prescribed, and our homes are blessed and sanctified with it during this sacred season. While these all have a great deal of significance and meaning attached to them, the true importance of the Feast is captured in the second line of the Troparion for Theophany: "When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest . . ." It was on this memorable day that the voice of the Father bore witness to His beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truthfulness of this solemn event — revealing the Holy Trinity for the entire world to see. St. John Chrysostom encourages us to have faith in the Most Holy Trinity: "Our faith is the throne of the soul, the foundation of life. The life-giving root of faith is the Father — the unwithering branch, the Son — the immortal fruit, the Holy Spirit. The Trinity exists from eternity. It is divided in Persons, but One in essence and power. It is without beginning: eternal, ageless and without end."

The celebration of the Feast of Theophany dates back to the 4th century, making it one of the oldest of holy days. Originally, our Lord's Nativity was also observed concurrently with His Baptism on this day. A separation in the observance of these important events occurred in the 5th century during the reign of the Emperor Theodosius.