

*The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
Of North America*

*The Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest
Antiochian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation*

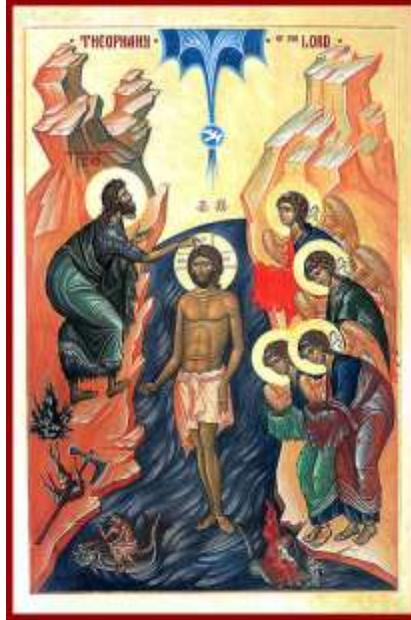
كنيسة البشارة الأرثوذكسية الأنطاكية

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Sunday January 3rd, 2016

Tone 7 / Eothion 10

Sunday after Theophany of Christ

الأحد الذي بعد عيد الظهور الإلهي

Sunday Services:

Vespers on Saturday 6:00 PM, Sunday Matins 9:30 AM

10:30 AM Divine Liturgy

THE FIRST ANTIPHON

* When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was in his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

* The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? O thou Jordan, that thou was driven back? (***Through the intercessions..***)

* Glory... Both now... (***Through the intercessions ...***)

THE SECOND ANTIPHON

* I am well pleased, for the Lord will hear the voice of my prayer. He hath inclined His ear unto me; therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.

Save us, O Son of God, Who wast baptized by John in the Jordan; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

* The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell took hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow, and I called upon the Name of the Lord.

Save us, O Son of God, Who wast baptized by John in the Jordan; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

* Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Save us, O Son of God, Who wast baptized by John in the Jordan; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

Glory... Both now... *O, only begotten Son and Word of God...*

THE THIRD ANTIPHON

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Let the house of Israel now confess that He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Let the house of Aaron confess that He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Let them now who fear the Lord confess that He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. (*Now sing the Festal Apolytikion: "When Thou, O Lord."*)

(الأنديفونا الأولى)

في خروج اسرائيل من مصر، وبيت يعقوب من شعب بربري (بشفاعة والدة الإله...)
أبصره البحر فهرب والأردن رجع إلى الوراء (بشفاعة والدة الإله...)
المجد... والآن... (بشفاعة والدة الإله....)

(الأنديفونا الثانية)

أحببت أن الرب يستمع لصوت تضرعي (خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من اعتمد من يوحنا في الأردن...)
الضيق والمخاض أصاباني فدعوت اسم الرب، سأكون مرضياً أمام الرب في أرض الأحياء (خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من اعتمد من يوحنا في الأردن...)

المجد... (خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من اعتمد من يوحنا في الأردن...)
الآن وكل أوانٍ... يا كلمة الله...

(الأنديفونا الثالثة)

إعترفوا للرب فإنه صالح وإن إلى الأبد رحمته، ليقل بيت إسرائيل، ليقل كل أتقياء الرب إنه صالح وإن إلى الأبد رحمته. (باعتماذك يا رب في نهر الأردن...)

During the Little Entrance, after the verses of the Third Antiphon, chant the Apolytikion of Theophany. The Eisodikon (Entrance Hymn) is "O come, let us worship... save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead..." as on ordinary Sundays. After the Little Entrance, chant the apolytikia in the following order:

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE SEVEN

Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world the Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF THE THEOPHANY OF CHRIST IN TONE ONE

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, worship of the Trinity wast made manifest; for the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son. And the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of His word. O Christ our God, Who hath appeared and enlightened the world, glory to Thee. • Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

KONTAKION OF THE THEOPHANY OF CHRIST IN TONE FOUR

(**On this day Thou hast appeared**)

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, O Lord, and Thy light hath been shed upon us, who praise Thee with knowledge, saying, Thou hast come and appeared, O unapproachable Light.

للقيامة – بالحن السابع):
حطمت بصليبك الموت وفتحت للّص الفردوس/ وحوّلت نوح حاملات الطيب وأمرت رسلك أن يكرزوا/ بأنك قد قُمت أيها المسيح الإله/
مانحاً العالم الرحمة العظمية.

(طروبارية عيد الظهور)
باعتمادك يا رب في نهر الأردن، ظهرت السجدة للتالوث، لأن صوت الأب تقدم لك بالشهادة، مسمىً اياك ابناً محبوباً، والروح بهيئة
حمامة، يؤيد حقيقة الكلمة، فإنا من ظهرت وأنرت العالم، أيها المسيح الإله المجد لك.

ترتل طروبارية القديس شفيح الكنيسة

(البشارة – بالحن الرابع)
اليوم رأس خلاصنا، وإعلان السر الذي منذ الدهور، لأن ابن الله يصير ابن البتول، وجبرائيل بالنعمة يبشّر، فلذلك ونحن معه لنهتف نحو
والدة الإله، إفرحي أيتها الممتلئة نعمة الرب معك.

القنطاق:

اليوم ظهرت للمسكونة يا رب، ونورك قد ارتسم علينا، نحن الذين نسبحك قائلين: لقد أتيت وظهرت، أيها النور الذي لا يبدى منه.

The Epistle

*Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us.
Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.*

The Reading is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (4:7-13)

Brethren, grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is He who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

الرسالة

لتكن يا رب رحمتك علينا،
ابتهجوا أيها الصديقون بالرب.

فصل من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول الى أهل أفسس 4:7-13

يا إخوة لكل واحد منّا أعطيت النعمة على مقدار موهبة المسيح. فلذلك يقول: لَمَّا صعد الى العلى سبى سبباً وأعطى الناس عطايا. فكونه
صعد هل هو إلا أنه نزل أولاً الى أسافل الأرض؟ فذاك الذي نزل هو الذي صعد أيضاً فوق السموات كلها ليملا كل شيء. وهو قد أعطى
أن يكون البعض رسلاً والبعض أنبياء والبعض مبشّرين والبعض رعاةً ومعلمين لأجل تكميل القديسين ولعمل الخدمة وبنيان جسد المسيح
الى أن ننتهي جميعنا الى وحدة الإيمان ومعرفة ابن الله الى إنسان كامل الى مقدار قامه ملء المسيح.

The Gospel

The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (4:12-17)

At that time, when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulon and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness

have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

الإنجيل

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس متى الإنجيلي البشير 17-12:4

في ذلك الزمان لما سمع يسوع أن يوحنا قد أسلم انصرف الى الجليل وترك الناصرة وجاء فسكن في كفرناحوم التي على شاطئ البحر في تخوم زبولون وفتاليم ليمت ما قيل بإشعيا النبي القائل: "أرض زبولون وأرض نفتاليم، طريق البحر، عبر الأردن، جليل الأمم. الشعب الجالس في بقعة الموت وظلاله أشرق عليهم نور". ومنذئذ ابتدأ يسوع يكرز ويقول: توبوا فقد اقترب ملكوت السموات.

"Once we have in some measure acquired the habit of self-control, and have learnt how to shun visible sins brought about through the five senses, we will then be able to guard the heart with Jesus, to receive His illumination within it, and by means of the intellect to taste His goodness with a certain ardent longing."

St. Philotheos of Sinai.

كلمة الراعي التوبة

يذكر متى الرسول في إنجيل اليوم آية من النبي إشعيا (٩: ١-٢) «أرض زبولون وأرض نفتاليم، طريق البحر، عبر الاردن، جليل الأمم» وهي بقاع حول بحيرة طبريا حيث يبدأ الجليل. وكان إشعيا ينظر من زمن بعيد إلى هذه الأرض التي قدسها يسوع برسالته.

جليل الأمم منطقة يسكنها الكثير من الوثنيين (واليهود يُسمون الوثنيين الأمم) لذلك تابع النبي قوله: «الشعب الجالس في الظلمة أبصر نورًا عظيمًا»، فها الله نفسه ثالوثًا قدوسًا، أبًا وابنًا وروحًا يظهر على المياه ليقدسها ويجعل الحياة كلها مقدسة. في هذه المنطقة التي سكنها يسوع -في كفرناحوم تحديدًا- استهلّ البشارة بأية كان قد استعملها يوحنا الصابغ: «توبوا فقد اقترب ملكوت السموات».

لقد جاء الملكوت بمجيء الملك، وكما رتلنا في عيد الظهور الإلهي، حيث يكون الملك فهناك انتظام أو انسجام، ولهذا نتوب لأن ملك النفوس قد جاء وكشف حياة الله وسر الله ومحبة الله لنا، وكان كشفًا مذهلًا. فإله في ما بيننا الآن ولم يبقَ إلها بعيدًا قابعا بأعلى سمواته، ولكنه قد جاء ولأمسنا وساكننا ولاطفنا وأحبنا حتى الموت، موت الصليب. وليس من مساكنة أطيب من أن يكون الله نفسه رفيقا لنا، رفيقا بنا عندما نكون مرميين في هاوية الخطيئة وفي جُب الشقاء الإنساني. إذا كنا على الحضيض، فالابن الحبيب على الحضيض معنا. وإن كنا في الخطيئة، فالله معنا لأنه يذهب إليها ليفتش عنا ويذوقنا ويفهمنا ويرفع عنا ثقل الخطيئة. انه قد شارك الإنسان لحمه ودمه، ولهذا ليس من وضع بشريّ كائنا ما كان، وليس من حالة شقاء أيا كانت الا والمسيح قد ذاقها لأنه قاسى الموت، ومن عرف الموت عرف كل شيء.

بسبب كل ذلك «توبوا». التوبة ممكنة لأن صاحبها ومُعطيها هو معنا وهو معطينا إياها. انها بمتناول أيدينا. قبل مجيء المخلص كان الناس في سعي إلى الخيرات وإلى الفكر الصالح، ولكنهم ما كانوا يدركون حقا ما هو الخير

وما هو الصلاح لأن الخير لم يكن قد تجسّد. وأما وقد جاءت الصالحات كاملة بمجيء يسوع، فإنها هنا مرمية في الدنيا، مطروحة علينا، مقدوفة في قلوبنا. نستطيع الآن أن نتوب لأن الله قد تاب إلينا من سمائه. «توبوا» عبارة تعني في لغة الإنجيل «تحولوا»، تعيروا، غيروا ما في أذهانكم. ماذا في أذهاننا؟ أفكار هذا العالم. وما أفكار هذا العالم؟ انها فكر الشيطان، فكر حقد وبغض وشهوة. كل ما في هذا العالم، كما قال الرسول يوحنا الحبيب في رسالته الأولى: «لأن كل ما في العالم شهوة الجسد وشهوة العيون وتعظم المعيشة» (٢: ١٦). كل خطايانا تُردّ إلى شهوة العين وشهوة الجسد والمجد الباطل. ولهذا، إن عرفنا كلمة الله مطروحة في قلوبنا، فإننا نستلذّها ولا ندوق غيرها. فإذا أبصرنا نور المسيح مضيئاً، ليس فقط في الجليل والسامرة واليهودية، ولكن مضيئاً في نفوسنا، إذ ذلك نلتفت إليه ونكتفي به. الله الرب ظهر لنا منيراً للساكين في الظلمة وفي ظلال الموت. تبنا في حياة جديدة، وتناولنا المسيح جسداً ودماً، وقد عرفنا انه معنا وفي ما بيننا. عرفنا أن نور الأردن قد صبغ الأرض وأنه قادر أن يصبغنا جميعاً وأن يُجددنا بنعمته. جاورجيوس مطران جبيل والبترون وما يليهما (جبيل لبنان).

❖ Church Announcements

- ❖ Blessing of Homes: Father is going around blessing homes. Please, call or email Father to schedule a time to bless your home. Father will continue blessing homes until Lent starts.
- ❖ **Instructions for blessing of homes:**
 1. The home of every Orthodox member of our community should be blessed every year by the priest. Father is going to make sure to contact all members to bless their homes. You may call Father to schedule a time to visit your home at 403/993-7945.
 2. **Meals are not required or expected**, just coffee/tea and visiting with you and your family.
 3. The whole family should be gathered together. Please have an icon of Christ, the Theotokos, or the baptism of Christ, plus a bowl for Holy Water (you can pick up Holy Water from church or Father will bring it with him), a candle, and several icons for the children to carry in procession.
 4. TV and music should be turned off during the prayer.
 5. Try to learn the Troparia in English or Arabic so the whole family can sing it together.
 6. The father of the family will lead first followed by mom, then the children followed by Father in procession throughout the house as he blesses it with Holy Water.
- ❖ **New Year Resolution/Decision:** Dear Lord I would like to make a resolution for the New Year but I need your Grace and help to fulfill it. I desire o Lord to:
 1. Attend church every Sunday with my family.
 2. To come early before the Liturgy starts.
 3. To keep the fast of the church.
 4. To go to confession. Lord I don't know how to confess my sins and I am scared, please help me.

5. To give from my time, talents and treasures back to God for my gratitude for all His gifts. I want to increase my giving to my church this year. I want to give back to God a percentage of my income \$_____.
6. To pray with my family at home every day. To eat together with my family every day.
- ❖ **Attention all members:** Please, sign up to offer the Holy Bread for your good health and for the health of your family. Choose a Sunday and see Skia. Also, we should sponsor coffee hour after Liturgy, keep it light and simple. Every family is asked to pick up a Sunday.
 - ❖ **Do you know:** if you come late and miss the epistle, we should not take communion?
 - ❖ **Resuming Vespers every Wednesday at 7:00 PM, followed by Bible Study.**
 - ❖ **Parish Council Meeting:** Saturday January 16th at 9 AM. All meetings are open to all members.
 - ❖ **Choir meeting today after Liturgy.**
 - ❖ **Bible Study on Sunday:** starting today there will be a Bible Study on the reading of the day in depth. Pick up your coffee and come and join us upstairs in the church.
 - ❖ **Do you know your Orthodox Faith?** Visit www.antiochian.org/discover to learn more about our Church teachings.
 - ❖ **Visit this link for education and encouragement:** <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/faithencouraged>, and ancientfaith.com. Also visit: www.patristicnector.org
 - ❖ **The Word Magazine:** You can read it online at www.antiochian.org It is full of great information about our sister communities and their activities, as well as educational articles.
 - ❖ **Giving back to God:** Everything we have belongs to God. If we come to church every few weeks or months and give only a few dollars, how can our church continue paying its bills? Give regularly and consistently. Give a portion of your income back to God. Look at the suggested guide below.

Guide to Proportionate Giving

Annual Income	10%	8%	6%	4%	3%
\$25,000	2,500	2,000	1,500	1,000	750
\$35,000	3,000	2,800	2,100	1,400	1,050
\$40,000	4,000	3,200	2,400	1,600	1,200
\$50,000	5,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	1,500
\$60,000	6,000	4,800	3,600	2,400	1,800
\$70,000	7,000	5,600	4,200	2,800	2,100
\$80,000	8,000	6,400	4,800	3,200	2,400
\$90,000	9,000	7,200	5,400	3,600	2,700
\$100,000	10,000	8,000	6,000	4,000	3,000
\$120,000	12,000	9,600	7,200	4,800	3,600
\$150,000	15,000	12,000	9,000	6,000	4,500

Stewardship Part 5: “I will give a tenth to Thee”

By Archbishop Mark

As we continue our study of stewardship in the book of Genesis, we will take a look at Jacob, grandson of Abraham. Since Jacob was quite a character and scoundrel, I will provide a brief background. Jacob and Esau were twin boys born to Isaac and Rebekah. At the time of their birth, Esau was born first, but Jacob was grasping his heel. Jacob’s name literally means “he supplants” or “he takes by the heel” (Genesis 25:24f). Names were often chosen at the time of a person’s birth to represent something of a person’s character as displayed by events surrounding his birth. According to Ancient Near Eastern customs, the firstborn male would receive a double portion of the inheritance. In this case, since there were two sons, the assets would be divided into three portions and the oldest, Esau would receive two portions and Jacob would receive one.

In Genesis, we are told that Esau returned from hunting and asked Jacob for some of the stew he had made. Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau, despising his birthright, swore to Jacob, and gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:29f). Later in their lives, Isaac their father was getting old and his eyes were dim. As was the custom, he wanted to bestow his

blessing upon his eldest son before his death. This story is quite interesting and is found in Genesis 27. Needless to say, Jacob tricked his father into thinking he was Esau and he stole his father's blessing, intended for Esau. Esau was furious and planned to kill Jacob upon their father's death.

Fearing his brother, Jacob was directed by his mother to go to her brother's house approximately 600 miles away until Esau calmed down. As Jacob journeyed, he came to a place called Luz. Perhaps, out of despair, he did not want to be sociable; arriving after the city gates were shut, Jacob ended up sleeping in the open and used a stone for a pillow. The theft of his brother's birthright resulted in his fleeing from his own family, fear of fratricide, sleeping in the open with a stone for a pillow. Jacob's way of doing things obviously needed to change, as he lost all that was dear to him.

Let us take a look at how the Lord reveals himself to the runaway in Genesis 28:10-22: "Jacob left Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place, and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.' Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it.' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then Jacob made a vow saying, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that Thou givest me I will give the tenth to Thee.'"

Jacob's encounter with God resulted in a change of heart and a new way of thinking. Instead of attempting to gain blessings by stealth, he would put his trust in the Lord. Jacob's craftiness and manipulation were only a source of grief, causing him to lose all that was precious to him. As we read above, Jacob made a simple vow, that "if the Lord would provide bread, clothing and bless

him to return to his father's house in peace, he would give a tenth to the Lord." Even though the Lord had promised to be with him, give him land and a multitude of descendants, Jacob only asked for the necessities of life and promised the Lord would be his God, the place where he slept would be God's house and he would give a tenth to the Lord.

While there is certainly much more to say about Jacob, we see he was beginning to discern a difference between his needs and his wants. Additionally, rather than making his own way, he would look to the Lord as the source of all his needs. This recurring theme—of God being the source of all blessings—is written quite large and repeated quite often in Holy Scripture. Jacob was not worthy of God's blessings. He was a scoundrel in flight from his brother. Yet the Lord is the One Who searches out the scoundrels who have made of mess of their lives and transforms them.

As Jacob was unworthy of God's many blessings, so are we. As we pray each time before receiving the Holy Gifts, "I believe, O Lord and I confess, that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." How can we each be chief or first among sinners? Because we each know that His Grace is sufficient to keep us, yet we continue to nurture our passions, continue to sin even though we sense the presence of the Holy Spirit attempting to restrain us from our sinful behavior. Nevertheless, no matter how many times we fall, He is there to lift us up again and restore us to communion with Him.

The Lord not only provides us with our daily bread and clothing, but He has given us eternal life together with Him. As we look at Jacob's vow, he asked the Lord to provide the necessities and allow him to return to his earthly home in peace, promising the Lord that He would be his God, Luz (Bethel, literally "house of God") would be the Lord's house and he would give the Lord a tenth. Jacob only asked to be able to return to his earthly home in peace, yet we are promised freedom from slavery to Satan, our sins and eternal Life. Let us at least do as much as Jacob did and show our gratitude to the Lord for His many blessings, known and unknown.

There Be Dragons

By Fr. Stephen Freeman

Today marks one of the greatest feasts of the Orthodox year (New Calendar), the Feast of Theophany, Christ's Baptism in the Jordan river. Across the world Orthodox Christians will gather after the Liturgy to bless the waters: the ocean, a river, a spring, etc.

Every feast day in Orthodoxy is connected to the Feast of Pascha, because Pascha is God's great act of salvation. However, some feasts show this connection more clearly than others. Three feasts in the year share the same pattern of services: Pascha, Nativity, and Theophany. Each has a Vespers Liturgy on its Eve and a Vigil the night before (with occasional variances).

The icons of the three feasts are strikingly similar, with Christ descending into a background that is usually rendered with darkness. At Pascha the darkness is the darkness of death and Hell where Christ has gone to raise the dead. At Nativity the darkness is the cave in which he is born. This darkness is the darkness of the world that is caught in sin and death – but it is the same darkness as Hell. At Theophany the icon depicts Christ standing on the waters of the Jordan – but the waters themselves are depicted as dark, or at least highlighted with a dark background. The darkness at this feast is precisely the same darkness as that pictured in the icon of Pascha. For Theophany is the feast of Christ's baptism – and baptism, St. Paul tells us is a baptism into the death of Christ. His Baptism is a prefigurement of His death.

Thus the waters of the Jordan are revealed as Hades. Christ's descent into the waters becomes his descent into Hades where he "leads captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8) and sets free those who have been held in bondage to death. The vigil of Theophany, like the vigil of Pascha, includes the reading of the book of the prophet Jonah – the reluctant messenger of God who was thrown overboard by his companions and swallowed by a great fish. This book is read because it contains the same image as the icons – the descent into the depths of Hades.

Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

At the Vespers of Theophany we hear this phrase:

Thou hast bowed Thine head before the Forerunner and hast crushed the heads of the dragons. Thou hast descended into the waters and hast given light to all things, that they may glorify Thee, O Savior, the Enlightenment of our souls.

The phrase, "crushed the heads of the dragons," comes from Psalm 74:

Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the dragons on the waters. Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan, thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

In this Psalm, God is recalled both as Creator, but also as the one who has brought order into the chaos of the world. He not only creates the waters, but crushes the heads of the dragons that dwell there. The “dragons” in the Psalm are an old English translation of the Hebrew word for whales. But the word “dragon” is an apt description of the demonic forces that are defeated in Christ’s death and its prefigurement in Baptism.

In the prayer over the waters, the priest says:

Thou didst sanctify the streams of Jordan, sending down from heaven Thy Holy Spirit, and didst crush the heads of the dragons that lurked therein.

This same prayer is prayed over the waters blessed on the day of Theophany. The service for the blessing of the waters usually takes place by a local body of water.. At the very heart of the blessing a hand cross is thrown out into the water three times and retrieved with the singing of the festal troparion:

When Thou O Christ wast baptized in the Jordan,

the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.

For the voice of the Father bear witness to Thee,

and called Thee His beloved Son.

And the Spirit in the form of a dove,

confirmed the truthfulness of His word.

O Christ, our God who hast revealed Thyself,

and hast enlightened the world glory to Thee!

The same troparion is sung throughout the homes of the faithful during the season after Theophany as the priest carries the same blessing into our homes. Theophany is a proclamation to nature itself of Christ’s salvation. Our lives have plenty of “dragons,” in all shapes and sizes. But Christ is victorious over everything that would destroy his creation – particularly the people who are His own.

