

THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATERS AT THEOPHANY

St John the Theologian Orthodox Church
a mission parish of
The Orthodox Church in America

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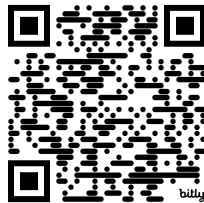
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See parish website for updates



gainesvilleorthodox.org

JANUARY 6
The Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
Great Blessing of Waters

After the prayer before the ambo at the end of Liturgy, the clergy go in procession, with candles and incense, to the place where the Blessing of Water is to take place. The priest holds the precious cross in his hand. The choir sings the following stichera: by Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem:

Stichera at the Great Blessing of Water

Tone 8 (by Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem)

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters crying:

“Come, one and all,
receive the Spirit of wisdom,
the Spirit of understanding,
the Spirit of the fear of God, //
from Christ Who now has shone forth!”

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the Spirit of the fear of God, //
from Christ Who now has shone forth!”

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified:

The Jordan is parted in two.
It holds back the flow of its waters, //
as it beholds the washing of the Master. (twice)

You have come to the river as a man, O Christ the King,
hastening to be baptized like a servant by the Forerunner //
on account of our sins, O good God Who love mankind.

You have come to the river as a man, O Christ the King,
hastening to be baptized like a servant by the Forerunner //
on account of our sins, O good God Who love mankind.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 8

To the voice of one crying in the wilderness,
"Prepare the way of the Lord,"
You came, O Lord, taking the form of servant.
You asked to be baptized though You have no knowledge of sin.
The waters saw You and were afraid.
The Forerunner trembled and cried aloud:
"How will the Lamp illumine the Light?
How will a servant lay his hand on the Master?
You take away the sin of the world, O Savior.//
Sanctify both me and the waters!"

Deacon: Wisdom

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. (35:1-10)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader:

Thus says the Lord: Thirsty desert rejoice, let the desert exult and flower like a lily. And the deserts of Jordan will flower and be overgrown and exult. And the glory of Lebanon has been given to it and the honour of Carmel. And my people will see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of God. Be strong, enfeebled hands and palsied knees. Give comfort and say to the faint-hearted, 'Be strong and do not fear. See, our God is giving judgement and will give it. He himself will come and save us. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will hear. Then the lame will leap like a deer and the tongue of stammerers will speak clearly, because water has broken out in the desert and a channel in a thirsty land. And the waterless land will become pools and there will be a spring of water for the thirsty land. There will be joy of birds there, folds for flocks and reed beds and pools. And there will be a pure way there, and it will be called a holy way, and no one unclean may pass along it. There will be no unclean way there. But the scattered will walk upon it and not go astray. There will be no lion there, nor will any evil wild beasts go up on it or be found there. But the redeemed and gathered by the Lord will walk on it. And they will return and come to Sion with joy and exultation, and everlasting joy will be upon their head. And on their head praise and exultation and joy will possess them. Pain, grief and sighing have fled away.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Deacon: Wisdom

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. (55:1-13)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader:

Thus says the Lord: You that thirst, go for water. And as many of you as have no money, make your way and buy. And eat and drink wine and fat without money and price. Why do you spend money on what is not food, and toil for what does not satisfy? Hear me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in good things. Give heed with your ears and follow in my ways. Listen to me and your soul will live among good things. And I will make an eternal Covenant with you, the sure mercies of David. See, I have given him as a testimony among the Nations, a ruler and commander among the Nations. See, Nations who do not know you will call upon you, and peoples who are not acquainted with you will take refuge with you, for the sake of the Lord your God and the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you. Seek the Lord, and when you find him, call upon him. But when he comes near you, let the impious abandon his ways and a lawless man his plans. And return to the Lord and you will find mercy, and cry out, for he will abundantly forgive your sins. For my plans are not like your plans, nor are my ways like your ways, says the Lord. But as far as heaven is from earth, so far is my way from your ways and your thoughts from my mind. For as rain or snow comes down from heaven and does not return until it has saturated the earth and it brings forth and sprouts and gives seed to the sower and bread for food, so will my word be. Whatever comes out of my mouth will not return to me empty, until everything that I wished has been fulfilled. And I will make my ways and my commands prosper. You will go out with gladness and be taught with joy. For the mountains and hills will leap up, welcoming you with joy, and all the trees of the field will clap with their branches. And instead of brambles cypress will come up, and instead of nettles myrtle will come up. And there shall be for the Lord a name and an everlasting sign, and it will not fail.

Deacon: Wisdom

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. (12:3-6)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader:

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Thus says the Lord: Draw out water with gladness from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day, Sing to the Lord and cry out his name. Proclaim among the Nations his glorious deeds, remind them that his name has been exalted. Sing to the name of the Lord, for he has done great things. Proclaim these in all the earth. Exult and be glad, you that dwell in Sion, because the Holy One of Israel has been exalted in the midst of her.

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the Third tone.

The Lord is my light and my Savior; whom shall I fear? (*Ps. 26:1a*)

Choir: The Lord is my light and my Savior; whom shall I fear?

Reader: The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (*Ps. 26:1b*)

Choir: The Lord is my light and my Savior; whom shall I fear?

Reader: The Lord is my light and my Savior;

Choir: Whom shall I fear?

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: The Reading from the First Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader:

Brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant of how our Fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. And they were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And they all ate the same spiritual food. And they all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them. Now the rock was Christ.

Deacon: Wisdom

Reader: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Alleluia, Tone 4

Choir: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Reader: The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon many waters. (*Ps. 28:3*)

Choir: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Deacon: Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Priest: The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. (1:9-11)

Choir: Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Deacon: Let us attend.

Priest:

At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. And immediately as he was coming up from the water, he saw the heavens being parted and the Spirit like a dove coming down upon him. And there was a voice from heaven, You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The Litany of Peace

Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this holy house, and for those who enter with faith, reverence and the fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our Metropolitan (*N.*), for our Bishop (or Archbishop) (*N.*) for the honorable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the President of our country, for all civil authorities, and for the armed forces, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this city, for every city, town and village, and for the faithful dwelling in them, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For seasonable weather, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For travelers by land, by sea, and by air; for the sick, the suffering, for captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That these waters may be sanctified by the power, operation and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

- Deacon: That there may come upon these waters the purifying operation of the supersubstantial Trinity, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That there may be granted unto them the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan, by the power, operation, and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That satan may quickly be crushed under our feet, and that every evil counsel directed against us may be brought to ruin, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That the Lord God may deliver us from every attack and temptation of the adversary, and count us worthy of the good things that are promised, let us pray to the Lord.
- Deacon: That we may be illumined with the illumination of understanding and piety through the descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That the Lord God will send down the blessing of Jordan, and sanctify these waters, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That this water may be a gift of sanctification, and a deliverance from sins, for the healing of soul and body and for every good purpose, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That this water may spring up unto eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That it may be shown to be the averting of every snare of enemies, of visible and invisible, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: For them that draw from it and take of it for the sanctification of their homes, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That it may be to the cleansing of soul and body of all that with faith draw and partake of it, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.
- Deacon: That we may be counted worthy to be filled with sanctification through the partaking of these waters, by the invisible manifestation of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
- People: Lord, have mercy.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Deacon: That the Lord God may hearken unto the voice of supplication of us sinners, and have mercy on us, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by your grace.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

People: To you, O Lord.

The Priest reads the following prayer in a low voice.

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ, only-begotten Son, who are in the bosom of the Father, true God, source of life and immortality, Light from Light, who came into the world to enlighten it, flood our mind with light by your Holy Spirit and accept us as we bring you praise and thanksgiving for your wondrous mighty works from every age, and for your saving dispensation in these last times. By it you clothe yourself in our weak and beggared matter and coming down to the measure of our servitude, King of all, you accepted also to be baptised in the Jordan by the hand of a servant, so that, having sanctified the nature of the waters, you, the sinless one, might make a way for our rebirth through water and Spirit and re-establish us in our original freedom. As we celebrate the memory of this divine Mystery, we entreat you, Master, lover of mankind: Sprinkle on us, your unworthy servants, cleansing water, in accordance with your divine promise, the gift of your compassion, that the request of us sinners over this water may become acceptable by your goodness and that through it your blessing to be granted to us and to all your faithful people, to the glory of your holy, venerated Name. For to you belong all glory, honour and worship, with your Father who is without beginning, with you all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

And he says to himself, "Amen."

The Priest begins this Prayer in a loud voice:

A Composition of Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem.

Trinity beyond all being, beyond all goodness, beyond all godhead, all-powerful, all-vigilant, invisible, incomprehensible; Creator of the spiritual beings and rational natures, innate goodness, unapproachable Light that enlightens everyone coming into the world, shine also in me your unworthy servant. Enlighten the eyes of my mind that I may dare to sing the praise of your measureless benevolence and power. May my supplication for the people here present be acceptable, so that my offences may not prevent the Holy Spirit from being present here; but permit me now without condemnation to cry out to you and say, Master, lover of mankind, beyond all goodness, Almighty, eternal King. We glorify you, the Creator and Fashioner of the universe. We glorify you, only-begotten Son of God, without father from your Mother, without mother from your Father. For in the preceding feast we saw you as a babe, but in the present one we see you full and perfect man, our God, made manifest as perfect God from perfect God. For today the moment of the feast is here for us and the choir of saints assembles here with us, and Angels keep festival with mortals. Today the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove dwelt upon the waters. Today the Sun that never sets has dawned and the world is made radiant with the light of the Lord. Today the Moon with its radiant beams sheds light on the world. Today the stars formed of light make the inhabited world lovely with the brightness of their splendour. Today the clouds rain down from heaven the shower of justice for mankind. Today the Uncreated by his own will accepts the laying on of hands by his own creature. Today the Prophet and Forerunner draws near, but stands by with fear seeing God's condescension towards us. Today the streams of Jordan are changed into healing by the presence of the Lord. Today all creation is watered by mystical streams. Today the failings of mankind are being washed away by the waters of Jordan. Today Paradise is opened for mortals and the Sun of justice shines down on us. Today the bitter water as once for Moses' people is changed to sweetness by the presence of the Lord. Today we have been delivered from the ancient grief, and saved as the new Israel. Today we have been redeemed from darkness and are filled with radiance by the light of the knowledge of God. Today the gloomy fog of the world is cleansed by the manifestation of our God. Today all creation shines with light from on high. Today error has been destroyed and the coming of the Master makes for us a way of salvation. Today things on high keep festival with those below, and those below commune with those on high. Today the sacred and triumphant festal assembly of the Orthodox exults. Today the Master hastens towards baptism, that he may lead humanity to the heights. Today the One who does not bow bows down to his own servant, that he may free us from servitude. Today we have purchased the Kingdom of heaven, for the Kingdom of the Lord

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

will have no end. Today earth and sea share the joy of the world, and the world has been filled with gladness. The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and were afraid. The Jordan turned back when it saw the fire of the godhead descending in bodily form and entering it. The Jordan turned back as it contemplated the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, descending and flying about you. The Jordan turned back as it saw the Invisible made visible, the Creator made flesh, the Master in the form of a servant. The Jordan turned back and the mountains leapt as they saw God in the flesh, and the clouds uttered their voice, marvelling at what had come to pass, seeing Light from Light, true God from true God, the Master's festival today in Jordan; seeing him drowning the death from disobedience, the goad of error and the bond of Hell in Jordan and granting the Baptism of salvation to the world. Therefore I too, a sinner and your unworthy servant, recount the greatness of your wonders and, seized with fear, in compunction cry out to you:

After completing this, he says in a more powerful voice,

Great are you, O Lord, and wonderful your works, and no word is adequate to sing the praise of your wonders (x3).

For by your own will you brought the universe from non-existence into being, you hold creation together by your might, and by your providence you direct the world. You composed creation from four elements; with four seasons you crowned the circle of the year. All the spiritual Powers tremble before you. The sun sings your praise, the moon glorifies you, the stars entreat you, the light obeys you, the deeps tremble before you, the springs are your servants. You stretched out the heavens on the waters; you walled in the sea with sand; you poured out the air for breathing. Angelic Powers minister to you. The choirs of the Archangels worship you. The many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim as they stand and fly around you hide their faces in fear of your unapproachable glory. For you, being God uncircumscribed, without beginning and inexpressible, came upon earth, taking the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of mortals. For you could not bear, Master, in the compassion of your mercy to watch the human race being tyrannised by the devil, but you came and saved us. We acknowledge your grace, we proclaim your mercy, we do not conceal your benevolence. You freed the generations of our race. You sanctified a virgin womb by your birth. All creation sang your praise when you appeared. For you are our God who appeared on earth and lived among mortals. You sanctified the streams of Jordan by sending down from heaven your All-holy Spirit and you smashed the heads of the dragons that lurked there.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Then the priest says the following thrice, blessing the water with his hand at each repetition:

Therefore, O King, lover of mankind, be present now too through the visitation of your Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. (x3)

And give to it the grace of redemption and the blessing of Jordan. Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a deliverance from sins, an averting of diseases, unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic strength. That all who draw from it and partake of it may have it for cleansing of souls and bodies, for healing of passions, for sanctification of homes, for every suitable purpose. For you are our God, who through water and Spirit renewed our nature made old by sin. You are our God, who in the days of No drowned sin through the water of the flood. You are our God, who through Moses freed the Hebrew race from the slavery of Pharaoh through the sea. You are our God who split open the rock in the desert, and waters rushed out and torrents flooded down, and you satisfied your thirsty people. You are our God, who through Elias turned Israel from the error of Baal.

And now, Master, do you yourself sanctify this water by your Holy Spirit. (x3)

Give to all who partake of it sanctification, blessing, cleansing, health.

Save, O Lord, and be merciful unto our Metropolitan N., our Bishop (or Archbishop) N., the the priests, priestmonks, the Diaconate in Christ, all the clergy and people here present, together with brethren who are absent for just cause.

Save, O Lord, our faithful rulers.

And preserve them under your protection in peace, and subdue under them every enemy and adversary, granting all their petitionw which are for salvation and life eternal, that by the elements, by men and angels, by things visible and invisible, your most-holy name may be glorified, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

People: And to your spirit.

Deacon: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

People: To you, O Lord.

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

And the Priest says the Prayer in a low voice.

Incline your ear and hear us, Lord, who accepted to be baptised in Jordan and to sanctify the waters, and bless us all, who signify our calling as servants by the bending of our necks. And count us worthy to be filled with your sanctification through the partaking and sprinkling of this water. And let it be for us, Lord, for healing of soul and body.

Exclamation

For you are the sanctification of our souls and bodies, and to you we give glory, thanksgiving and worship, with your Father who is without beginning, and your All-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

And immediately, blessing the water in crosswise form with the Precious Cross, he dips it perpendicularly, sinking it in the water and raising it, holding it by the crossbars with both hands, and singing this Troparian,

Tone 1 Troparion

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan,
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You,
and called You His beloved Son;
and the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ our God, You have revealed Yourself //
and have enlightened the world, glory to You.

And the same is sung by the choir. Again, a second time, in like manner the priest signs the water; and likewise a third time. Each time the priest signs the water, the choir sings the troparion a second and a third time. Then the priest takes some of the sanctified water in a bowl, and turns to face the west. He holds the Cross in his left hand and the sprinkler in his right hand. Then all approach and kiss the Precious Cross, and the Priest signs each in the face with the sanctified water. And the Troparion is sung many times, until everyone has been sanctified by the sprinkling of the water. Then these hymns are sung:

Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany

Tone 6

Let us the faithful praise the greatness of God's plan for us.
For He Who alone is pure and undefiled
becomes a man because of our transgressions.
He is cleansed with our cleansing in the Jordan,
sanctifying both us and the waters,
and crushing the heads of the dragons in the water.
Therefore, let us draw water in gladness,
for upon those who draw in faith
the grace of the Spirit is invisibly bestowed by Christ God, //
the Savior of our souls.

Tone 1 Troparion

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan,
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You,
and called You His beloved Son;
and the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ our God, You have revealed Yourself //
and have enlightened the world, glory to You.

Tone 4 Kontakion

Today You have shone forth to the world, O Lord,
and the light of Your countenance has been marked on us.
Knowing You, we sing Your praises:
"You have come and revealed Yourself, //
O unapproachable Light."

Then Divine Liturgy concludes as usual, with

People: Blessed be the name of the Lord, henceforth and forevermore. (3x)

And so on, through the full Dismissal as usual.