

The Sunday before Theophany

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” (KJV)

God’s Holy Church has chosen St. Mark’s Gospel to prepare the faithful for the major feast of Theophany. St. Mark’s Gospel references prophecies of Isaiah (Is.40:3) and Malachi.(Malachi 3:1) to show the presence of God through the centuries.

The Holy St. John the Baptist came long after the times of Isaiah and Malachi. God continued to work through the centuries. When the world needed John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, they entered human history.

Christ put St. John the Baptist into perspective saying: “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he .(Lk.7:28)

The Church is in the time of the Forefeast of Theophany, The Forefeast is a time of joyful anticipation and preparation. The Feast of Theophany offers renewal in the world as holy baptism gives new life to the baptized.

St. John the Baptist was chosen among all men of all centuries to have the singular honor of baptizing the Lord Jesus Christ. Holy St. John was humbled in being so honored.

Let us learn humility from St. John the Baptist. Let us learn repentance from St. John the Baptist. May our own baptism be a point of reference and our subsequent life be measured according to our faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

At our baptism we first recited the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. We expressed belief in the Holy Trinity. We said in The Creed that the Holy Spirit “spoke through the Prophets”

The Lord Jesus Christ’s baptism and our baptism are inseparable with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Today’s Gospel references the same Holy Spirit. The Christian life is inseparable with the Holy Spirit.

Consciousness of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity is heightened and glorified on the Feast of Theophany. Serious believers are humbled and awe-struck by this manifestation.

The soul is transformed in the celebration of the Feast of Theophany. Renewal of life for the world and the person takes place. Joy ascends from the Christian heart, mind and soul on Theophany.

Love for the Lord God cannot be manufactured. Love for the Lord God arises within the believer naturally. Serious believers firmly reject sin and the way of Christ is freely chosen.

Jesus demonstrated humility when taking on human flesh and having St. John perform the baptism in the Jordan. St. John was humble in his relationship with Jesus.

Arrogance and pride are harmful to the soul. St. John and Jesus Christ demonstrate the way of humility. Believers do well to value humility and seek to make humility dominate within the heart, mind and soul.

The arrival of the Feast of Theophany comes shortly after the New Year and affords a new beginning in life. The past year has been filled with difficulties in many different ways.

Christ's baptism offers hope and joy. Personal baptism offers hope and joy. The New Year and the Feast of Theophany offer hope and joy. Now is the time to set aside the negatives in life and concentrate on God's love and hope.

God's Holy Church provides structure and order throughout the year. This structure and order when made a part of daily life enables the believer to grow and be nourished in ways that are healthy for the heart, mind, soul and body.

Baptism involves the heart, mind, soul and body. Jesus Christ's baptism puts the world into perspective and gives a new order to Creation. Serious believers are attentive to the effects of Christ's baptism on the universe.

Today we rejoice in the Forefeast of Theophany. Our anticipation is heightened. Our full confidence rests in and is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. With great love for Christ, we greet the arrival of each moment of life in Christ.

Thirty Second Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday before Theophany. Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles. January 4/17, 2021. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

