

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)

The Church is drawing near to the Feast of the Holy Theophany of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church uses this time to prepare believers. The connection of St. John the Baptist with the ancient prophets is embedded in the Gospel of St. Mark.

Believers benefit from thinking about God acting through the centuries. God is patient and kind. God prepares believers for the future. Just as God prepared believers through the prophets, God prepares believers today for the future.

Heeding the word of God and always being attentive is profitable for the soul, for earthly life and for eternal life. John the Baptist knew his place in life and served God in an exemplary and lasting way.

God provides each believer with wisdom for daily personal life and for the path to eternal life. God's Holy Church offers the Divine services and the instruction for believers to embrace and to make a part of daily life.

St. John the Baptist knew his place in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Mark's Gospel makes clear that John knew Jesus was much greater than himself.

Each person does well to discern the personal expectations from the Lord God for his or her daily life. Turning to the Lord God enables believers to receive the guidance necessary on the best ways to use God's gifts and talents in life.

Believers are able to work out in the Church the way life is to be lived in ways pleasing to the Lord God. God is always present with believers in the journey through life.

The mystery of how life is to be lived becomes understandable as the believer lives in Christ and grows in Christ. God reveals to the believer the course of action to take.

The believer has the personal responsibility from Holy Baptism until departure from this life to look to the Lord God for daily guidance. Personal attention is to be directed to God on a daily basis for the path to eternal life.

God gives believers signs and messages through the course of each day. Attentive believers will look for the signs of God's presence and find reassurance. Angels and saints have a part in forming and shaping attentive believers' lives.

The Holy Scriptures, prayer and the wisdom literature of the Church serve to guide believers in understanding the path to follow to the Heavenly Kingdom. Church services keep the believer united with Christ on the path to the Kingdom.

Repentance has a place throughout the Christian life. St. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ preached the value of repentance. (Mt.3:2, Mt.4:17) Mature believers value repentance and seek to practice repentance regularly.

Repentance involves being conscious of personal sin and desiring to expel sin from personal life. Choosing Christ and the way of Christ increases for serious believers seeking to repent.

Believers benefit from learning more about the complete commitment of St. John the Baptist to Jesus Christ. St. John was an exemplary model of humility and obedience. Humility and obedience to Christ are always part of the Christian life.

Believers are to grow in Christ from Holy Baptism until departure from this life. The fasts and feasts of the Church as well as the examples and lives of the saints provides structure and a basis for learning leading to Christian growth.

Being a passive Christian minimizes Christian growth and deprives the believer of the full potential in the life in Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul describes the possibilities for believers in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

Holy Apostle Paul wrote: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

In the remaining of days of earthly life and until the Lord's Second Coming, being active in Christ affords unlimited possibilities. God's Holy Church is where to find the paths to these possibilities and to benefit from the Church's wisdom.

St. Mark's Gospel verifies the continuity of God's presence and wisdom through the ages. The Holy Gospel is proclaimed in the Church with regularity at each Divine Liturgy.

Wise believers heed the Gospel messages and attempt to make them a part of daily life. Joy arises in life when believers live true to Christ as known and preached in the Holy Gospel.

The Sunday before Theophany. Holy Prophet Malachi. Holy Martyr Gordius.
January 3/16, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic