

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)

Repentance is essential in the Christian believer's life. Repentance is necessary throughout life from the time personal sin is realized and personally acknowledged.

God's Holy Church encourages and provides for the confession of sins when the believer chooses to repent. St. Mark's Gospel serves as a record of St. John the Baptist being a preacher of repentance.

Holy St. John was humble in his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. St. John pointed to Jesus Christ as baptizing with the Holy Spirit. St. Mark's Gospel is rich in content regarding St. John's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believers interested in moving away from sin and becoming more faithful to Jesus Christ will heed the importance of repentance. Love for Jesus Christ and the desire for inner peace motivates believers to repent.

Hunger in the soul is satisfied when Jesus Christ fills the heart, mind and soul. Peace fills the heart, mind and soul when repentance occurs. St. John the Baptist serves to inspire believers seeking to repent.

Jesus Christ's Baptism in the Jordan by St. John comes to mind today as the Feast of Theophany draws near. The honor bestowed upon St. John to participate in Jesus' Baptism is a singular honor of lasting significance.

The Church honors St. John down through the centuries. Believers seek St. John's intercession before the Lord at all times. Miracles are constantly attributed to St. John by fervent believers.

Churches around the world bear the name of St. John the Baptist. Individuals are regularly named after St. John the Baptist. Families and individuals celebrate St. John as their patronal saint.

Repentance is worthy of consideration throughout the Christian life. Every person is a sinner. Every person says or does something that is offensive and contrary to the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance is the way to put sin behind and to begin anew in Christ. Being able to repent and begin anew in Christ are reasons to be grateful. Appreciative believers take time to thank Jesus for His mercy, forgiveness and love.

Newness in Christ begins at baptism. Joy in Jesus Christ permeates the whole being. Baptism changes the person's identity forever.

The journey to God's Kingdom continues when the believer repents and is renewed in Christ. God's Holy Church fosters and encourages repentance. The Church nourishes and guides the believer in the journey to the Kingdom.

A foretaste of God's Kingdom is experienced in the Holy Mysteries of the Church. Eternal life in the Kingdom awaits each faithful believer. Repentance keeps the believer on the road to the Kingdom.

Thank God for the faithfulness of St. John the Baptist. Thank God for the humility demonstrated by St. John. St. John's understanding of his relationship with Jesus Christ merits deep consideration.

Humility is exemplified in St. John. Humility is Personified in Jesus Christ taking on human flesh. Humility in the Christian life is always desirable and appropriate as the way of life.

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is fresh in believers' minds. The Baptism of Jesus Christ will be celebrated soon. This is a joyous time in God's Holy Church. Joy in Christ exceeds understanding.

Repentance refreshes joy in the believer's life. Repentance lifts the weight of sin through Jesus Christ's forgiveness. The mind is cleared and the weight of sin is removed when repentance takes place.

St. John the Baptist brings Jesus Christ to the believer's mind. St. John the Baptist has a permanent place on the iconostasis of each church. The Church honors and always remembers St. John.

On this Sunday before Theophany keeping St. John at the forefront of our thoughts is entirely appropriate. St. John remains inseparable with thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Holy Church prescribes the current Gospel to be proclaimed every year. Attentive believers learn more about St. John and his relationships with Jesus Christ with each passing year.

While the mind functions well, learning about St. John and his relationship with Jesus is always beneficial. Thank God for the Church preserving and honoring the memory of St. John. Thank God for the opportunity to repent.

The Sunday before Theophany. January 2/January 15, 2023. Venerable Seraphim of Sarov; St. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome. Forefeast of Theophany. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic