

The Sunday after Theophany

Matthew 4:12-17

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (KJV)

Today God's Holy Church continues to celebrate the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan. The celebration will continue throughout the week. Jesus' Baptism is of great importance.

Jesus' Baptism manifested the Holy Trinity. This manifestation is expressed clearly in the Troparion of the Feast. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are clearly mentioned in the Troparion.

Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan renewed Creation. John the Baptist experienced the greatest of honors when Baptizing Jesus. Each believer benefits when reflecting on the meaning of his or her baptism into Christ.

Believers are to live a life of purity and faithfulness to Jesus Christ following Baptism. The life of purity and faithfulness to Christ is to continue until the believer departs earthly life.

God's Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life are the ultimate goals for believers. God's Holy Church guides, instructs and nourishes believers for life's journey. The desire to nourish the soul's hunger keeps faithful believers united with Christ.

Jesus Christ preached repentance for believers. Repentance is an opportunity for believers to reject and move away from sin that has become part of earthly life. Repentance offers joy and forgiveness in Christ.

Jesus Christ washes away the sins of believers. Jesus establishes new life in believers. New beginnings occur when repentance takes place. Repentance is an opportunity to prepare for God's Kingdom and eternal life.

Fasting and prayer facilitate repentance. Honest self-evaluation reveals the sin affecting personal life. God's Church shows the way for repentance. Holy Confession and Communion provide newness and restored unity with Christ.

The lives of the saints and martyrs prove that extreme sinners can repent and be renewed in Christ. Extreme sinners can become saints if serious repentance occurs and the person becomes a complete follower of Christ.

The truth and proof of the life in Christ becomes known through living in Christ. Baptism is the first step. Repentance is necessary throughout life. Every person sins. Every sinner is welcome to repent.

Doubts will occur in believers. Believers will fall away from Christ. Sins will occur either intentionally or unintentionally. Hope for newness in Christ is always possible.

Depression and despair are conquerable with Christ. Hope leads to unity with Christ. The lives of saints and martyrs offer inspiration and intercession for believers. The Mother of God is a constant help for believers reaching out in faith.

Repentance begins with the believer taking the first step of acknowledging personal sin. The desire to get rid of the sin and begin anew in Christ must exist for repentance to take place.

Weak faith is strengthened by prayer, fasting and reading the Scriptures. Going to Church facilitates the atmosphere for repentance. God helps hesitant believers taking the steps to repent.

Jesus preached repentance. John the Baptist preached repentance. Wise believers engrain the value of repentance into their heart, mind and soul. The new life in Christ is always better than the old life in sin.

The Feast of Theophany offers a new way of looking at the world. Creation is perceived differently due to Jesus' Baptism. Each person's baptism is a life-changing experience.

The world is different when a person exists the Baptismal font. The person exiting the Baptismal font goes forth in Jesus Christ. The life in Christ is beyond the earthly into the eternal.

Believers take on the responsibility to live faithfully in Christ when saying "yes" to being baptized. Each person determines the degree of seriousness to be applied to live in and follow Christ.

The greater degree of seriousness applied to living in Christ, the greater the opportunities for growth in Christ. Christ is always present. Christ does not disappoint believers choosing to repent and follow Him.

This time of the year when Jesus' Baptism is being celebrated is a good time to heed Jesus' call for repentance. Sincere repentance is always timely. Repentance is necessary and beneficial before earthly death.

Every person will eventually face a final judgment before Christ. Continued repentance is the best preparation for the final judgment. Thank God for the present Gospel message of repentance.

Thank God for Jesus' willingness to forgive sinners. As we celebrate Jesus' Baptism, let us celebrate our own baptisms and rejoice in being Christ's followers. Let us repent to ensure we are fully united with Christ and continue in joy.

The Sunday after Theophany. Holy Martyrs Julian and Vasilissa. Venerable George Chozebit. St. Gregory of Ochrid. January 8/21, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic