

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 Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Luke 2:20-21, 40-52

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.⁶ And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (KJV)

The Holy Orthodox Church is moving with certainty toward the Feast of Theophany. The celebration of Jesus Christ's Nativity is concluded. Joy remains fresh in the hearts and minds of believers.

The Julian Calendar New Year has arrived. The Church is commemorating St. Basil the Great today. Renewal continues for believers. The Feast of Theophany increases anticipation and expectations in believers' hearts and minds,

All believers have experienced the joy of Holy Baptism, The Baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan increases consciousness among serious believers about their own baptism.

The celebration of Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan renews Creation. Each believer participates in the renewal. The sprinkling, drinking of and blessing with Holy Water connects the Divine with the earth's inhabitants.

This is a time for believers to think deeply about the care of Creation and the responsible stewardship of Creation. Humans have a great responsibility in caring for the world in the present and until Jesus Christ's return.

Abuse of the earth, abuse of humans and other aspects of earthly life is poor stewardship and amounts to great sin. World wars, greed and extensive poverty challenge and cast a pall on the stewardship of world leaders.

Violence in the cities and rampant sin in many places demands great introspection by serious believers. The repentance St. John the Baptist preached needs to be considered.

The repentance Jesus Christ preached merits great thought. Great change is needed throughout the world for peace to be achieved. Repentance among serious believers can lead to wide spread change in human relationships.

Poverty and violence are best attacked when repentance takes place. Christians have the responsibility to begin the change through repentance. The proof of the Christian life becomes evident when Christ lives in hearts and daily actions.

The Holy Prophets of old spoke directly to the violence and sin prevalent in society. Contemporary believers challenge sin by repenting of sin and embracing Jesus Christ.

God's Holy Church offers the nourishment for believers to live in Christ. The Church opens the path to the Kingdom of God and eternal life. The Kingdom of God and eternal life are the ultimate goals established at Baptism.

Today we thank God for the blessing of hearing the Holy Gospel readings. Today we thank God for St. John the Baptist and the Evangelists Mark and Luke. We are grateful for the example of St. Basil the Great.

Time is of the essence for contemporary believers. We never know when Jesus Christ will return. Jesus Christ would not be pleased with the degree of violence existing in today's world.

Jesus Christ would not be pleased about the overall nature of human relationships. Love is lacking in relationships in too many different places. Hardships and hard hearts are too prevalent in the world.

Let us thank God for the hope and renewal possible in Christ. Let each believer set the example of repentance. With God's help, change and greater love becomes possible.

The Sunday before Theophany. The Circumcision of the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Basil the Great. The Julian Calendar New Year. January 1/14, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic