



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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THE HOLY PROPHET, FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST JOHN

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FIRST ANTIPHON

When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was in his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion!

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

The sea saw Thee and fled: Jordan was driven back. What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest, and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

(Refrain)

Glory... Now and ever... (Refrain)



SECOND ANTIPHON

I am well pleased for the Lord will hear the voice of my prayer. He hath inclined His ear unto me; therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live! **Refrain:** Save us, O Son of God, Who wast baptized by John in the Jordan, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"!

The sorrows of death encompassed me, and the pains of hell took hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow, and called upon the Name of the Lord. (Refrain)

Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful! (Refrain)

Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

Troparion of the Theophany (see below) introduced by the following verses:

- Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever!
- Let the house of Israel confess that He is good, for His mercy endures forever!
- Let all who fear the Lord confess that He is good, for His mercy endures forever!

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF THEOPHANY (Tone 1): When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity wast made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness unto Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son; and the Spirit in the likeness of a dove confirmed the truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God, Who hath appeared and enlightened the world: glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST (Tone 2): The memory of the righteous is celebrated with songs of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for thee, O Forerunner. Thou wast shown indeed to be the most honorable of the prophets, for in the waters thou didst baptize Him Who had been proclaimed. After suffering with joy in behalf of the truth, thou didst proclaim even to those in Hades the God Who appeared in the flesh, Who takes away the sin of the world, and grants us great mercy.

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4, Russian): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION OF THEOPHANY (melody of "Today the Virgin gives birth"): On this day Thou hast appeared unto the whole world; and Thy light, O Sovereign Lord, is signed on us who sing Thy praise and chant with knowledge: Thou has now come, Thou has appeared, O Thou Light unapproachable!

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord. O God, hear my prayer.*

From the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 19:1-8) In those days, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the One Who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve of them in all. And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the Kingdom of God.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to John

(John 1:29-34) At that time, John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of Whom I said, 'After me comes a man Who ranks before me, for He was before me.' I myself did not know Him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on Him. I myself did not know Him; but He Who sent me to baptize with

water said to me, 'He on Whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

A WORD ON THEOPHANY AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

"Theophany" means, in Greek, "appearance/manifestation/ showing of God." What is shown to us? The Baptism of Christ is a further act of humility, by which the Lord and Master enters the life of a servant. The hymns of the Church proclaim in poetic theology that "He who has established the heavens" and "wraps Himself with light as in a garment"—God—came to us as a helpless baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes and fed milk at His Mother's breast. After Christmas we celebrate the Circumcision of the Lord (January 1), and sing that the Giver of the Law submits to the Law and is circumcised accordingly. And now Christ comes to be baptized by John like all those who were coming to receive a baptism of forgiveness in the expectation of the Messiah.

Upon coming out of the water, the Lord saw the heavens "torn open" (Mark 1:10) and the Spirit descending, like a dove, upon him. Today's Gospel (John 1:32) says that the Baptism was also granted to see this vision. To see the heavens open is something that we read in the opening chapter of the Book of Ezekiel: "the heavens opened and I saw visions of God" (Ezek 1:1). What visions? "The appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezek 1:28). And, according to his own description of the Glory is that of a *humanlike* enthroned figure resplendent with light. As for John the Baptist, when asked who he is, he replies "'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord' (John 1:23). He is quoting from the Prophet Isaiah's famous prophecy of Israel's return from exile: "A voice of one calling: In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God ... And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together" (Isaiah 40:3, 5). If John the Baptism is that "voice" preparing the way for the Lord, for God, for the Glory about to be revealed, who is Jesus? He is, quite simply, the one who is revealed: the Lord, the Glory. Recall Ezekiel's description of the enthroned humanlike Glory; recall also Simeon's announcing that the baby brought to the temple is "the Glory of Israel" (Luke 2:32) and St. Paul's calling Christ "the Lord of Glory" (1 Cor 2:8).

St. John the Baptist knows that the Lord does not "need" the washing of the Jordan as a sign of repentance. And yet, the Lord wants to **fulfill all righteousness**. Yet again we can find the paradox of God's amazing humility: He who came to baptize the whole world with the power of the Holy Spirit submits to the Jordan Baptism. Pause and consider also that on Theophany we bless the water. Why? Because when Christ was baptized in the Jordan, He did not receive anything from that washing—rather it was He who sanctified the water and revealed Himself to the Baptist (and to us) as the true Baptizer, **He Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit**. One of the Theophany hymns shows John the Baptist as shaken with awe as he finds himself about to baptize the very *Lord* who spoke to Moses at the burning bush and later gave the Law in fire and majesty and awe:

Moses, when he came upon You, displayed the holy reverence that he felt: perceiving that it was Your voice that spoke from the bush, he forthwith turned away his gaze [Exod 3:6]. How then shall I behold You openly? How shall I lay my hand upon You? If I baptize You, I shall have as my accusers the mountain that smoked with fire [Exod 19:18] ...

The Greek word *baptizo* means "to dip under, to immerse," and *baptisma* means "immersion." This is how people of the first century CE would have heard all this talk about baptizing, baptism, and the Baptist. It is important to remind ourselves that the Baptism brought by Christ, and with which all Christians have been washed is *NOT* the same as the baptism of repentance administered in the Jordan. Ours is a much greater gift: not an immersion into water, but an immersion into the Holy Spirit; not a

washing of the outside, but a cleansing and refashioning of the inside, so that the core of our being (“the heart”) becomes a permanent abode of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

This is why the prophet and forerunner John is a paradoxical figure: the Lord himself says of him, “among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matthew 11:11). On the one hand, he is a preacher of the Kingdom to come, a teacher of repentance, a martyr among martyrs, a champion and model of ascetical life, a holy visionary who, like Ezekiel, saw the heavens opened and beheld the Glory of God; above all, he is the prophet found worthy to point out the Coming One, the Messiah as present before his very eyes. On the other hand, St. John the Baptism only enters the Kingdom *after* Christ’s descent into the abode of the dead (look at the Icon of the Resurrection)—and *after* “the good thief,” the thief who stole Paradise with his tongue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEXT WEEKEND:

- **Saturday, 1/13:** Vespers at St. Anthony’s (6:30 PM)
- **Sunday, 1/14:** Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy at Sts Peter and Paul (Bishop Daniel presiding). Following Divine Liturgy, Bishop Daniel will lead the blessing of Lake Arthur.

Directions: from Butler take Route 422 W to the South Shore exit of Moraine State Park and turn right. Turn left at the sign for Bear Run Launch (at the corner where you see the State Park office) and go up the hill. At the top of the hill turn left following the sign for Bear Run Launch and go down the hill to the parking area.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21: SAINT ANTHONY’S DAY!

We will serve Matins (9 AM) and Divine Liturgy (10 AM) together with the priests and faithful of the other two Orthodox churches in Butler/Lyndora.

Our guest speaker will be Mr. **Martie Johnson**, a retired U.S. Navy Chaplain and former U.S. Marine. He and his family are converts to the Orthodox faith who worship at our St. Anthony’s Church in Butler and they are working to establish a Mission outreach in Mars/Cranberry PA (www.orthodoxoutreachusa.org).

This will also be a day of feasting! Our parish has developed the tradition of treating its guests to a spectacular chili lunch, with many, many types of chilis: hot, mild, with beans, no beans, vegan, Texas style, Chicago Style, Cincinnati Chili, German Chili (with sauerkraut!)—and vegetarian lasagna as a meatless option.

Since we are celebrating Saint Anthony the Great, “the father of monks,” we intend to take a special collection to assist the nuns at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Elwood City. Please be generous to these followers of Saint Anthony, who remember us always in their prayers before God.