

From the Divine Office for the Commemoration of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (Jan 10)

Leading a holy life, O Gregory, revealer of God, you enlightened your action by deep contemplation. For, cherishing wisdom for love of God, your lips drank richly of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Distilling the sweetness of your words, as a bee makes honey, you nourished the Church of God forever with your divine thoughts. Thus, from Heaven, where you remain as a hierarch, intercede constantly for us who celebrate your holy memory. (Vespers)

Let us all gather together to honor with hymns and canticles the most wise Gregory, the good shepherd, the Bishop of Nyssa, who followed the same path as his brother, Basil the Great. (Orthros)



**SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY
JANUARY 10, 2021**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Email: Brymc56@comcast.net Cell: (978) 314-1962
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (3rd)

1-I love the Lord because He has heard my voice in supplication.

O Son of God, Who were baptized by John in the Jordan River, save us who sing to you Alleluia!

2- The cords of death encompassed me, and I called upon the name of the Lord.

O Son of God, Who were baptized by John in the Jordan River, save us who sing to you Alleluia!

3- I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

O Son of God, Who were baptized by John in the Jordan River, save us who sing to you Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. The Lord is God and He has appeared to us.

People: **O Son of God, Who were baptized by John in the Jordan River, save us who sing to you Alleluia!**

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 7, pg. 42)

You destroyed Death by Your cross. You opened paradise to the thief. You changed the weeping of the myrrh-bearers, and commanded Your apostles to proclaim that You, O Christ God, have risen, granting to the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Theophany (Tone 1)

At Your Baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was revealed: for the Father's voice bore witness to You by calling You his Beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God who have appeared to us, and enlightened the world, glory to You.

Troparion of the Dormition (Tone 1, Pg 15)

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep, you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life, being the Mother of Life. Through your intercessions, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of the Theophany (Tone 3)

Today You have appeared, O Lord, to the universe and Your light, O Christ our God, has been impressed upon us who sing to You with full knowledge: You came and appeared, O Inaccessible Light.

The Lord Jesus: God and Man

Christ is clearly Lord in icons of this feast. Several signs of His divinity and preeminence are found in the way He is shown. In Western depictions of His baptism Jesus is often shown with His head bowed and hands folded in prayer. That is never the case in our icons. He is shown standing erect, often with His hand raised in blessing.

In some older icons Christ is depicted naked. We are back in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve, created in communion with God, are naked and unashamed. The original creation is restored and renewed with the coming of Christ.

“Once You clothed the shameful nakedness of our forefather Adam; now You are stripped naked of Your own will! You covered the roof of heaven with waters; now You wrap Yourself in the streams of Jordan, only merciful Christ.”

In later icons Christ is depicted with a drape around His waist, which represents the winding sheet in which He was wrapped for burial. The river is often depicted in the shape of a cave, suggesting the tomb in which He was laid.

In some icons the water envelops His sacred body which is visible in it. We are thus reminded of the death and resurrection of Christ into which our baptism immerses us.

In other icons Jesus is not submerged into the water at all. He is depicted astride the river as He blesses it. The River Jordan did not cleanse Christ; it is Christ's presence in its midst which sanctifies the waters.

Other Signs of God's Presence

The icon of the Theophany, as well as many of its hymns, includes other elements which point to the divine activity present in Christ at His baptism. Among them are:

John the Forerunner: The presence of John the Baptist is an essential part of the story of Jesus' baptism. In icons, however, the depiction of John is more about Christ than it is about him. In some icons John is showed bowing to the Lord, bent in awe before the One he had come to announce. In other icons John is depicted as gazing up toward heaven, as if beholding the manifestation of the Father and the Spirit. In either case, although he was the focus of all other baptisms which he performed, John was not the center of this one.

The Axe: In some icons we see a tree stump with an axe embedded in it near where John is standing. This recalls John's prophetic words to the Pharisees, *“even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”* (Mt 3:10). The axe ready to cut signifies that the Messiah is at hand.

The Seascape: In some icons Christ is shown standing on one or two rocks, sometimes arranged in the form of a cross. Here we are reminded of the resurrection icon in which the Lord is depicted astride the gates of Death. In that icon the personification of Death often lies bound beneath His feet. In the Theophany icon it is often snakes or a sea creature under His feet. In both cases what is depicted is Christ's victory over the powers of darkness. *“You crushed the heads of the dragons in the water”* (Ps 73:14).

“When You bowed Your head to the Forerunner, You crushed the heads of the dragons; and when You stood in the midst of the stream, You let Your light shine upon all creatures, that they might glorify You, Our Savior, who enlighten our souls!”

The Sea: At the bottom of the icon we often find two small figures with astonished looks on their faces, often astride dolphins. They personify these psalm verses, alluding to the Exodus but often heard during the feast of the Theophany: *“The sea saw and fled; Jordan turned back... What ails you, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back? O mountains, that you skipped like rams? O little hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob”* (Ps 114:3, 5-7). *Today the prophecy of the Psalms swiftly approaches its fulfillment: “The sea looked and fled: Jordan was driven back” before the face of the Lord, before the face of the God of Jacob! He came to receive baptism from His servant, so that our souls washed clean from the defilement of idolatry, might be enlightened through Him!*

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today

Health & Salvation of Mae, Freddie, Andre Yanni and Family. Requested by Mae Yanni

Health & Salvation of John Sillup. Requested by Marilyn & Zenon Tencza
+Mary Kloss. Requested by Tom Syseskey

Feb 14 Nan Nejaimy (1yr.), Charles & Lena (Esper) Nejaimy, Thomas & Irene (Ryan) Kelly, Katherine (Nejaimy) Kleimer. Requested by James Nejaimy & family.

We collected a total of **\$4,720** in Christmas offerings. Of that amount, \$3,780 was previously reported in the weekly collection summaries and \$940 was received at the Christmas Divine Liturgies. We also received a generous \$1,000 donation toward the cost of the new red/gold altar cloths, which is not included in the total. That allows us to use more of your donations to purchase items for the church. Thank you to all who made donations to the parish this Christmas. I will let you know what is being purchased with your donations as I purchase them. Next week, I'll publish a list of Christmas donations we received.

I am extremely grateful for your generosity! God bless you all!!

Last Week's Collection

Regular	\$ 955
Stole	\$ 50
Candles	\$ 30
Christmas Donations	\$ 1,650
Total	\$ 2,685

Remember the Melkite Church in Your Will: Give a lasting gift for future generations of Melkites and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to grow and flourish for your children's children. Simply add the following statement to your last will and testament: ***I hereby bequeath to the Melkite Eparchy of Newton the following sum: \$_____.*** Contact Bishop NICHOLAS personally to inform him of your generous bequest: 3 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER DONATIONS

Arthur Gazal in memory of Amelia & Shaker Gazal, Arthur P. Gazal, Frank & Toni Ricciardi, Selma Wenho, Florence Nasif

Barbara & Lawrence Morris in memory of Lena (Rahall) & Lawrence Morris, Leona & Vincent Jones

Barbara & William Abraham in memory of James & Julie Abraham

James & Karen Esper in memory of Carol Esper Webster

Janice & William Abdelnour for peace in the world

Joe & Lorraine Lian in memory of Freda & Joseph Lian, Sadie & Alex Kouri

Karen & Antonio Solitro in memory of Nicholas & Theodora Barouk, Matteo & Lucia Solitro

Katherine Thomas in honor of Thomas children & grandchildren, in memory of Marlene, Abraham & Margaret Thomas

Jagielski & Arraj Families in memory of Alfred Jagielski & George Arraj

Maria Filewicz in memory of Amelia Filewicz

Marie Haddad & Family in memory of Rodney Haddad, Sr. & all deceased members of Haddad family

Mary Rizk in memory of William Rizk, David & Wahega Kalil, Eva & Shakeeb Rizk

Marilyn & Zenon Tencza in memory of the Joseph, Nejaimy, & Tencza families

Michael & Virginia Mischitelli in memory of Dora & Nick Barouk, Assunta & Luigi Mischitelli

Patricia Cronican

Richard & Antoinette Esper in memory of James & Catherine Esper, Carol Esper Webster

Robert Ghiz

Sadie Mirante in memory of George & Adele Hajjar, Joseph Mirante, Sr., Joseph Mirante, Jr.

Sandra Lian in memory of George & Margaret Lian

Steven & Phyllis Callan in memory of Robert & Isabella Esper, Francis & Catherine Callan, Michael Sabacinski

Susan Arraje in memory of deceased members of Arraje & Hajjar families

Ted & Jeanne Nader in memory of the Nader & Allaire families

God bless you for your donations that helped make the church beautiful for the Christmas season!

The Lord Jesus: God and Man

WHAT DO WE CELEBRATE on January 6? Well, it's obvious, isn't it? Just look at the icon: it's Jesus' baptism!

Actually, neither the icon nor the feast celebrates *the fact that* the Lord Jesus was baptized. Rather, we remember *what happened at His baptism* and what it represents for us as we live our life in Christ. We do not call this the Feast of Christ's Baptism, focusing on the historical setting. Rather we call it the Feast of the Holy Theophany, or "manifestation of God,"

Manifestation of the Trinity

The troparion of the feast sets the tone for our reflection: "At Your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the Father's voice bore witness to You, calling You His beloved Son and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of His word. O Christ God, who have appeared to us and enlightened the world, glory to You!"

The story of this theophany is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In John's Gospel, as we shall see, the Baptist alludes to it as he describes the character and mission of Jesus.

The Father's Voice: Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell of a voice from heaven heard at Jesus' baptism calling Him "*My beloved Son*" (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22). None of the Evangelists say outright that this was the voice of God, but since their picture of Jesus as the Son of God is clear in the Gospels, we can draw no other conclusion.

In icons of the Theophany this voice is depicted symbolically by the ray of light which originates in a geometric shape – often a semicircle – and rests over the head of Jesus.

The Dove: All the Evangelists, including John, describe the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. In John's Gospel the Baptist offers his own testimony: "*He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit; and I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God'*" (Jn 1:33, 34).

In icons the dove is enclosed in an aureole, symbol of divine glory, in the midst of the ray representing the Father's voice.

St John of Damascus compared the dove which appeared at the end of the flood to the dove at Jesus' baptism. "As, at that time the world was cleansed of sin through the waters of the flood, then the dove brought an olive branch to Noah's Ark announcing the end of the flood, and peace came to the Earth, so, in like manner the Holy Spirit descends as a dove to announce forgiveness of sins and God's mercy on the world. Then [it was] an olive branch, now it is our Lord's mercy."

The graphic presence of the Father (by His voice), the Son (in the flesh) and the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) is the first such manifestation of the Holy Trinity in the New Testament. The second such revelation is at the Holy Transfiguration of Christ as His ministry is drawing to a close.

Instead of the Trisagion

All of you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia

Prokimenon

Reader: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.

People: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.

Verse: Give to the Lord, you sons of God, give to the Lord glory and praise

People: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.

Reader: The Lord will give strength to His people;

People: The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Epistle: Eph 4:7-13

Alleluia Verses

It is good to give thanks to the Lord; to sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

Verse: To proclaim Your kindness at dawn and Your faithfulness throughout the night.

Gospel: Mt. 4:12-17, Sunday After Theophany

Special Petitions for the Ecumenic Prayer (Inserted after the third petition)

- For all your people who have proven positive with the coronavirus, that they may be restored to full health and offer you their praise and thanksgiving, we pray to you, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all those who have died as a result of the coronavirus that they may be granted rest with the Saints and the mercy of God in the Heavenly Kingdom, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For doctors, nurses, and all in health care, risking their lives to minister to those afflicted with the coronavirus, that they remain safe, and in good health as they serve others, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all your people in Lebanon who were hurt during the disastrous explosion, that they may be restored to full health, and for those who died that they may be granted rest among the Saints, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For peace throughout the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.

Hirmos of the Theophany (Tone 6)

O my soul, magnify the Higher in honor and glory than the heavenly powers. All tongues are at a loss to praise you properly, and every intelligence even supernatural is rapt in wonder when it comes to honor you, O Mother of God. But in your graciousness accept our faith, knowing our holy longing. Intercessor of Christians, we extol you.

After Communion - Troparion of the Theophany