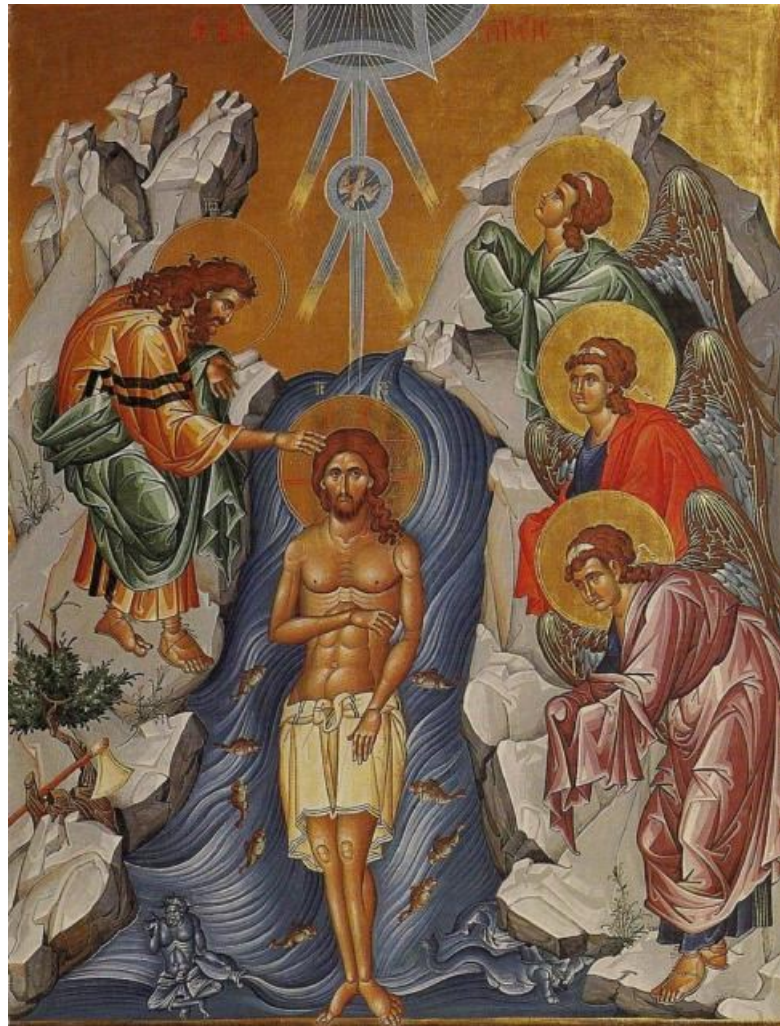


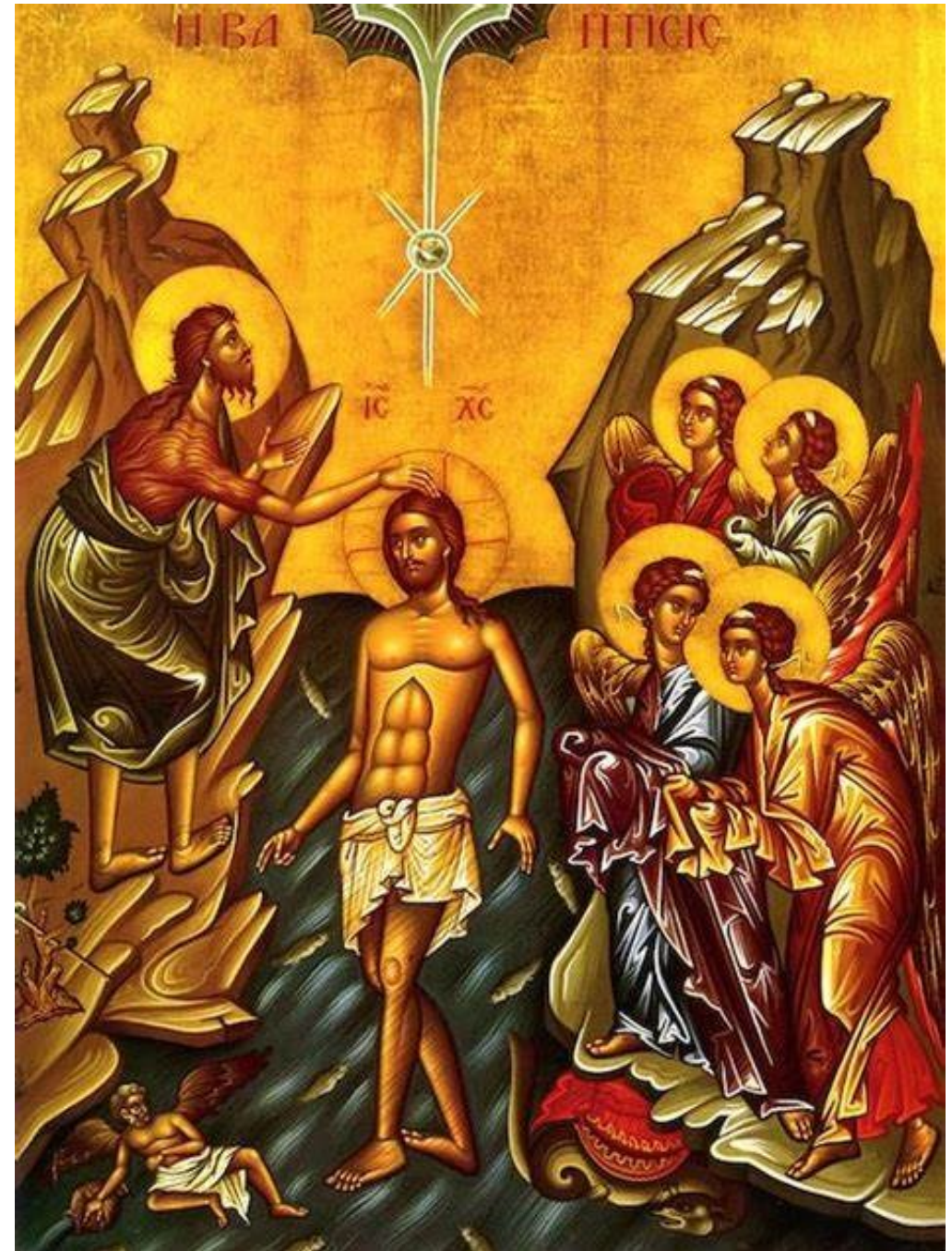
*From the Divine Office for Theophany*

*He who covers Himself with light as with a garment has deigned for our sake to become as we are. Today He is covered by the streams of the Jordan, though He had no need to be cleansed by them: but through the cleansing that he Himself receives, He bestows a rebirth on us. O wonder! Without fire, He casts anew - and without shattering, He refashions. And He saves those who are enlightened in Him, Christ our God, the Savior of our souls! (Vespers)*

*The true Light has appeared and grants enlightenment to all. Christ, who is above all purity, is baptized with us; He brings sanctification to the water and it becomes a cleansing for our souls. That which is outward and visible is earthly; that which is inwardly understood is higher than Heaven. Salvation comes through washing, and through water, the Spirit. By descending into the water, we ascend to God. Wonderful are your works, O Lord: glory to You! (Orthros)*



**LEAVETAKING OF THEOPHANY  
JANUARY 14, 2024**





**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**  
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Phone: (508) 752-4174  
Email: [olphmelkite@gmail.com](mailto:olphmelkite@gmail.com)/Website: [olphworcester.org](http://olphworcester.org)  
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor  
Cell: (774) 502-8547  
Rev. Deacon Elias Bailey  
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

### **Antiphon (Feast)**

1- Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His love endures forever.

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

2. Let the house of Israel say: He is good, for his love endures forever.

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

3. Let those who fear the Lord say: He is good, for his love endures forever.

*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 are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.

### **Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 8) pg. 42**

You descended from on high O Compassionate One; and consented to burial for three days that You might free us from suffering. O Lord, our life and our resurrection, glory to You!

### **Troparion of Theophany (Tone 1) Sung twice**

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.

### **Patronal Troparion (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 intercession, 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 Kingdom Is Within You**

While the Lord Jesus is the Kingdom of God in our midst, He tells us that this Kingdom may also be present in human hearts. When people are taken by the love of God and keeping His Commandments, the Kingdom of God is formed within them. When love is present, the God who is love is manifest as love within us.

Citing the Scriptures, Origen connects them with the Lord's injunction to pray "Thy Kingdom come": "'The Kingdom of God,' in the words of our Lord and Savior, 'does not come for all to see; nor shall they say: Behold, here it is, or behold, there it is; but the Kingdom of God is within you,' [Lk 17: 20, 21] 'for the word of God is very near, in our mouth and in our heart' [Deut 30:14].

Thus it is clear that he who prays for the coming of God's Kingdom prays rightly to have it within himself, that there it might grow and bear fruit and become perfect'" (*On Prayer*, 25).

### **Enduring for the Kingdom**

Many Christians today feel that, because God loves His entire creation, this means that everyone will enter the Kingdom of heaven automatically. They find it difficult to harmonize God's love for us with the need to respond actively to that love. While rejoicing in God's love for us, we need to remember these sobering words of the Lord:

*"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few (Mt 7:13, 14)... Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it" (Mt 7:24-27).*

Entering the Kingdom is possible for us, then, if we put the Lord's teachings into practice, something which may cause us great hardship. Living the Lord's way may cost us friends, a job, even family support. It will certainly cost us the freedom to live according to our own desires, unmindful of the needs of others. As the nineteenth-century elder of the Optina Monastery in Russia, St Anthony of Optina, wrote in a letter to one of his spiritual children: "Of course, it would be easier to get to paradise with a full stomach, all snuggled up in a soft feather-bed, but what is required is to carry one's cross along the way, for the Kingdom of God is not attained by enduring one or two troubles, but many!"

### **The Church and the Kingdom**

The ultimate expression of the Kingdom will be in the age to come when Christ, seated at the Father's right, shall reign forever and ever. There He shall be surrounded by the saints – those who have allowed the Kingdom within them to mature fully through communion with God in prayer and faithfulness to His teachings in action.

The Church on earth is, as it were, the "anteroom" of the kingdom of heaven: the vestibule through which we pass in order to enjoy the presence of God within. We enter this "vestibule" through the necessary doorway of baptism. As the Lord told Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5).

Yet for those outside the Church their goodwill toward believers is a kind of baptism into the kingdom, the "baptism" of love. As we read in Christ's parable of the judgment, "Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'" (Mt 25:34, 40).

## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Today** +Diane Moossa (1 yr.). Requested by Laurie Moossa  
**Jan 21** +Robert Aboody (40 day). Requested by his family

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Lauri Moossa  
 Next week's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by the family of Robert Aboody

**Please remember in your prayers:** Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplains, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, Melissa Kalpakgian, Susan Bailey, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in the Middle East.  
 If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

### Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$
Coffee Hr.	\$
Candles	\$
Xmas Flowers	\$
Xmas Offering	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>



**Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.**

**Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.**

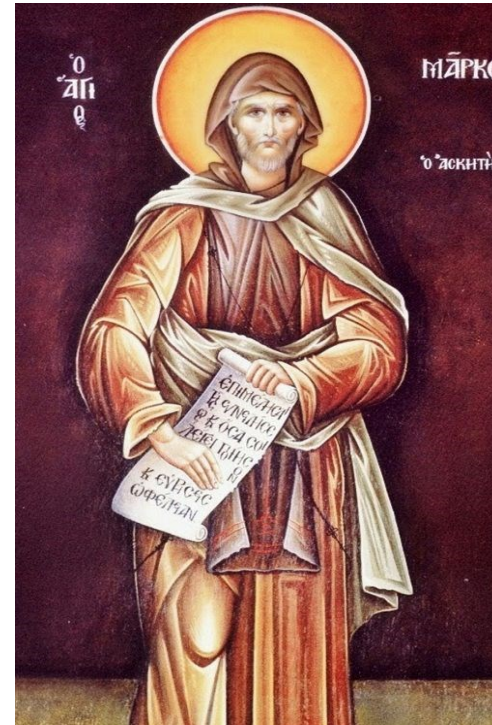


### BISHOP'S APPEAL

**The Bishop's Appeal is in full swing. Please prayerfully consider making a donation to support the important work of the Diocese. If every family donated \$100 the Appeal would generate over one million dollars.**

**You can donate by using the letter you received or by going to [www.melkite.org](http://www.melkite.org) and clicking on the Donate button.**

**God bless you for your generosity!**



We must always remember that we are not condemned for the multitude of our evils, but because we do not want to repent and learn. And those who have sinned must not despair.

Let that never be.

St. Mark the Ascetic

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## “The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand”

THE LORD JESUS BEGAN His public ministry with the same message that St John the Baptist had proclaimed before Him, namely that the “Kingdom of God” or the “Kingdom of heaven” was at hand. What did their hearers understand by this announcement and what should we take it to mean today?

### God’s Kingdom in the Old Testament

Biblical reflection on the world saw it as the creation of God. Therefore He was its king from the beginning. We find this in a number of places in Scripture, such as Psalm 93 (LXX 92):

*“The Lord is king, in splendor robed;*

*Robed is the Lord and girt about with might,*

*For He has made the world firm And it shall not be moved.*

*Your throne has been established of old; You are from everlasting”* (vv. 1-3).

Here the Kingdom of God is **all creation**. We sing verses from this psalm as the prokimenon of vespers on Saturday evening.

Old Testament prophets also saw **Israel** as God’s Kingdom. After the Babylonian exile the people of Israel were generally ruled by others – Syrians, Greeks or Romans – with brief interludes of independence. God’s people increasingly looked for God to intervene in human history by reestablishing their kingdom. According to the Book of Daniel, God’s instrument for restoring this kingdom would be the “*Son of Man*” (Dn 7) or “*Messiah*” (Dn 9). What was called the “Messianic Age” would usher in the Kingdom of God.

Jewish thought generally accepted the thought of the Prophet Isaiah that the great sign of God’s Kingdom would be a time of universal peace and brotherhood on the earth, without crime, war and poverty when “*the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea*” (Isaiah 11:9). The coming messiah would inaugurate this Kingdom by defeating the powers warring against God’s people.

The rabbis therefore rejected claims that Jesus was the messiah, since greed and enmity still exist in our world. He had “failed,” and died as a result. As the twelfth century Jewish thinker Maimonides wrote, failure or death is proof that a defeated leader is not the messiah: “If he does not succeed, or is killed in war, it is certain that he is not the messiah promised in the Torah” (Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Malakim 12).

### The Lord Jesus and the Kingdom

The Lord Jesus clearly claimed to usher in the Kingdom of God. At the same time He resisted being declared king by the Jews: “*When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone*” (Jn 6:15). His Kingdom, as He would tell Pilate, was “*not of this world*” (Jn 18:36).

The New Testament presents a vision that **Jesus Himself is the presence of the Kingdom**, what the third-century theologian Origen termed the *autovasileia* (the Kingdom in Himself). In Him there is perfect communion with the Father and an outpouring of God’s love. The Gospels show Him as constant in prayer and in doing the Father’s will. He manifests God’s love for mankind in a way that no other has done. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “Jesus himself is the Kingdom; the Kingdom is not a thing, it is not a geographical dominion like worldly kingdoms. It is a person; it is he.... By the way in which he speaks of the Kingdom of God, Jesus leads men to realize the overwhelming fact that in him God himself is present among them, that he is God’s presence” (Jesus of Nazareth, Part 1, p. 49).

**Instead of Trisagion:** All of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Alleluia!

### Prokimenon

**Reader:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

**People:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

**Reader:** Exult, you just, in the Lord; praise from the upright is fitting.

**People:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

**Reader:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us,

**People:** For we have hoped in You.

### Epistle: Eph. 4:7-13

### Alleluia Verses

Your favor, O Lord, I will sing forever; from generation to generation, my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

**Verse:** For You have said, “My kindness is established forever.” In heaven You have confirmed your faithfulness.

### Gospel: Mt. 4:12-17

### 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 Theotokos. But in your graciousness, accept our faith, knowing our holy longing. Intercessor of Christians, we extol you.

**Kinonikon:** The grace of God our Savior has appeared to all people. Alleluia.

**After Communion:** Troparion of Theophany

