

From the Divine Office for the Commemoration of the Martyr Tatiana (Jan.12)

O pure virgin, when you extinguished the passions of the flesh and the flames of sin with the dew of the Holy Spirit, who worked wondrously in your soul, you closed the mouths of lions in the middle of the stadium, where you bravely handed over your body to torments. Thus you overcame the Enemy and wove a crown of victory for your head, O Tatiana, who are now in the presence of God. (Vespers)

You shone radiantly, O martyr Tatiana, in your holy sufferings and in the crimson of your blood, soaring to Heaven like a beautiful dove. Wherefore, intercede continually before Christ for those who honor you. (Kontakion)



**SUNDAY AFTER THEOIPHANY
JANUARY 12, 2025**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Rev. Deacon Elias Bailey
Email: fr.bryan.mcneil@melkite.org Cell: (774) 502-8547
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for his love endures forever.

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

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

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

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

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

All: ***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 1) Pg.38

After the stone was sealed by the Jews and the while the soldiers were watching your spotless body, You rose, O Savior, on the third day, bestowing life to the world. Therefore, the heavenly powers cried out to You, O Giver of Life: Glory to your resurrection, O Christ! Glory to your kingdom! Glory to your economy, O You who alone are the lover of mankind!"

Troparion Of 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.

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.

Kontakion Of 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.

Matthew singles out the Pharisees and Sadducees – the religious establishment – calling them a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 3:7) most in need of repentance. He depicts the coming Messiah as One who “will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor” (we would say “clean house”) burning up the unrepentant “with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:11-12).

One image from the Gospels has found its way into many icons of John baptizing. John is described as warning, “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees” (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9), meaning that the house cleaning is about to begin. In many icons an axe is shown imbedded in a tree or tree stump to suggest this image.

In Luke specific examples for repentance are given in response to the question “What shall we do?” John tells the tax collectors not to extort more money than the tax law allows. He tells soldiers not to intimidate or accuse others falsely and to be content with their pay. And he tells everyone to give alms from what they have (see Luke 3:10-14).

In St John's Gospel, another note is added to the Baptist's message. He identified Jesus as the One who is coming and depicts his own work as a testimony to Jesus. “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world ...I came baptizing with water that He should be revealed to Israel” (John 1:29, 31).

The Baptism of Repentance

Immersion into a stream, river or bathing pool (*Mikveh*) was practiced for ritual purposes in first century Judaism. Orthodox and many Conservative Jews continue the practice to this day. Ritual baths were necessary for Jewish men in preparation for Yom Kippur or the Sabbath, for entering the temple or ascending the Temple Mount. Women were required to bathe for ritual purity after childbirth or menstruation. Gentiles submitted to a ritual bath upon converting to Judaism.

Some differences between these ritual baths and John's baptism are obvious. Jewish ritual baths are self-administered; John baptized people into the water. Jewish baptism was a physical cleansing to achieve ritual purity; John's baptism was to signify repentance, a moral act. In John's time, Jewish people expressed repentance by offering sacrifices in the temple. Since the destruction of the temple, Jews express repentance by prayer, almsgiving or doing righteous deeds. “Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Eleazar both explain that as long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now, one's table atones” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, 55a.). Hospitality to the poor had become the Jewish way of atoning for sins.

John's Baptism and Baptism into Christ

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read how St. Paul, “finding some disciples” in Ephesus, learned that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit. Hearing that they had been baptized with the baptism of John, St Paul explained: “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in Him who would come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus” (Acts 19:4).

Christian baptism is neither a kind or ritual purification or a symbol of repentance. It is the incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ. Through faith we are buried with Him in baptism and then rise from the water with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. This effects an organic union with Christ in His Body the Church, a result never imagined by John. As we say at every baptism in the words of St. Paul (Galatians 3:27), “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Dan Rahall. Requested by Lisa Jagielski & Family

Next Sunday Our families & friends, living and deceased

This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Houda Daou

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Andy & Jocelyn Aulo

Please remember in your prayers: Mark Bashour, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Thomas Houde, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Jeannine McNeil, Linda Gartner, Billy Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, Thomas Houde, Jeanette Halal, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in Ukraine & the Middle East. Let us also pray for the repose of the souls of Zakeya Assaf, Genvieve Hatem, Hanna Francis, Saddalh Alkateb.

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	\$1,415
Candles	\$ 60
Coffee Hr.	\$ 87
Stole	\$ 525
Donations	\$ 500
TOTAL	\$2,587

Let us pray for increased generosity to our parish!



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 UPDATE

We have raised \$5,250.14 toward our goal of \$8,000.

If you have not yet donated to the Appeal, there is still time. **The Appeal will end on January 31, 2025.** Keep in mind that for every dollar we raise above our goal, we get 50% of it back from the Diocese.

Thank you for your continued generosity to our parish and to the Diocese of Newton. You may also donate online at: melkite.org/appeal or scan the QR code below:



Fr. Bryan and Kh. June are away today. Fr. Marwan El Khoury is celebrating the Divine Liturgy this morning. Please make him welcome!

THE FORERUNNER AND HIS MESSAGE

WHO IS THE GREATEST SAINT after the Theotokos? Recent sentiment in the West looks to her spouse, St Joseph, as the foremost representative of holiness. For the Eastern Churches, however, “the Lord’s witness is enough” (troparion of St John). The liturgy here refers to the words of Christ concerning John, “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist...” (Matthew 11:11) Thus John the Baptist is regularly depicted in the “Deisis” icons flanking Christ, opposite the Theotokos. This same grouping is found as the basic component of icon screens along with the icon of the church’s patron.

A moving testimony to St John comes from the fourth-century Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose. John, he writes, “...did not enlarge the boundaries of an empire. He did not prefer triumphs of military conquest to honors. Rather, what is more, he disparaged human pleasures and lewdness of body, preaching in the desert with great spiritual power. He was a child in worldliness, but great in spirit. He was not captivated by the allurements of life, nor did he change his steadfastness of purpose through a desire to live...” (Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, 1.31).

John in the Scriptures

John’s unique holiness is displayed in the story of the Theotokos’ visit to his mother Elizabeth. There the Gospel tells us that, at Mary’s greeting, the child in Elizabeth’s womb leapt for joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (see Lk 1:39-45). The Gospel thus shows John as aware even in the womb of the greatness of Christ who had been conceived in the womb of Mary. Thus he fulfills the prophecy made by the angel Gabriel to John’s father, Zachariah: “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:45).

Reflecting on this event, St Ambrose connects the experience of John in the womb with that of another prophet, Jeremiah. This prophet, who lived during the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, describes God’s call to him: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). While Jeremiah describes himself as consecrated before his birth, Luke describes John as nothing less than filled with the Holy Spirit.

John reappears in the Gospels as an adult, living in the Judean desert and baptizing at the Jordan. This “desert” was not what we consider desert; it was actually grazing land, useless for agriculture but able to sustain the sheep and goats and the occasional solitary who lived there.

Nothing is said in the Gospels about the intervening years of John’s life, nor how he came to be in the desert. Some modern scholars have speculated that John was a member of the Essenes, a Jewish sect at the time which had retired to the desert and established a community there. Earlier lore, recorded in the fourth-century Life of John by Serapion of Thmuis, held that John was spirited away to the desert by his mother to escape slaughter when Herod’s servants killed the Holy Innocents. In Serapion’s Life, Elizabeth died when her son was seven years old; thereafter the boy was cared for by an ascetic in the desert.

The Ministry of John

St Mark’s Gospel presents us with a thumbnail description of John as a Forerunner, preparing the way for One greater than he by calling people to “a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). In Matthew John is depicted preaching “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). God’s action in Christ was immanent; those in need of repentance had best make up their minds to do so.

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

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 (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 ti 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.

Kinonikon (Tone 5)

The grace of God our Savior has appeared to all men. Alleluia.

After Communion: Troparion of the Feast



HOUSE BLESSINGS

It is traditional to bless homes during the time after the feast of Theophany. If you would like me to come and bless your home, please email me at fr.bryan.mcneil@melkite.org or call the office (508) 752-4174.