

*From the Divine Office for the Sunday Before Theophany*

*Make ready Zebulon, and prepare Nephtali! And you, O Jordan River, stop your flow and receive with a thrill of joy the Master coming to be baptized. And you, Adam, rejoice with the first mother, Eve, and hide not as you did of old in Paradise: for Christ at the sight of your nakedness has come forth to clothe you with the robe of innocence. Indeed, Christ has come to renew the whole creation, (Troparion)*

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness has gone forth: "O mountains, rejoice! Exult with joy, all mankind! For the eternal Word took flesh and is coming to be baptized by hands that He created, in the Jordan, to take away the sin of the world!" (Exapostilarion)*



**SUNDAY BEFORE THEOIPHANY  
JANUARY 5, 2025**



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

**Antiphon (3rd)**

1: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our Savior.

***O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia***

2: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

***Khallisna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka. Haleloueya.***

3: For God is a great Lord and a great King over all the earth.

***O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.***

**Entrance Hymn**

**Priest:** Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ.

**All:** ***O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.***

**Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 8) Pg.**

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 The Paramony (Tone 4)**

After Elias had gone up to heaven, Elisha threw his mantel in the Jordan River, which separated, opening a way, a dry path between two walls of water where he could pass: a true symbol of our baptism by which we pass through this passing life. Christ has been seen at the Jordan River to sanctify the waters

**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.

**Pre-Theophany Kontakion (Tone 3)**

Today the Lord Christ has appeared in the Jordan's waters, and He has cried out to John: Fear not of baptizing Me, for by own will I have indeed come to save Adam, the first created man.

**Baptism in Christ Jesus**

At the beginning of His ministry the Lord Jesus also made use of the baptism of repentance. We read in the Gospel of St John that "...when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee" (John 4:1-3).

With His death and resurrection, however, baptism became a vehicle for the imparting of the Holy Spirit.

Appearing to His disciples in the upper room, the risen Christ had bestowed His Holy Spirit upon His disciples unto the forgiveness of sins. Baptism would no longer be merely an expression of a person's repentance; it would actually convey the remission of sins by the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers in Christ would be baptized into His death and rise in His resurrection, becoming temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in Him and in His People. Before His ascension Christ commissioned His followers to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20). The power of the Holy Spirit would enable them to begin a mission which is still being undertaken by the Church all over the world.

Early Christians recognized the difference between the baptism of John and baptism in Christ. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, "...it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them..." (Acts 19:1-5).

This passage also witnesses to the complementary element in baptism, the laying-on of hands, which we call chrismation.

**The Baptism of John Today**

Around the year 1290, an Italian Dominican, Fra Ricoldo Pennini, encountered a small group of people in Mesopotamia who called themselves Sabaeans, whom he described as "A very strange and singular people... Their writing is a sort of middle way between Syriac and Arabic. They detest Abraham because of circumcision and they venerate John the Baptist above all." In the sixteenth century Portuguese Jesuits came upon a similar group in Bahrain. Like the disciples St Paul met in Ephesus, this latter group of Sabaeans accepted baptism in Christ. A tiny fragment of this people still exist called Mandaean, who appear to have incorporated Gnostic beliefs into their tribal lore. They practice the baptism of John every Sunday at their worship service which has elements in common with Christian liturgy. No one is sure when this community came into being. Nor is it certain whether they will survive the current destruction of their homeland in northern Iraq.

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness has gone forth: "O mountains, rejoice! Exult with joy, all mankind! For the eternal Word took flesh and is coming to be baptized in the Jordan by hands that He created, in order to take away the sin of the world!"* (Exapostilarion of the Forefeast)



### DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Today** +Nemo & Lillian Haddad, (50 yr.), Diane Moossa. Requested by Lauri Moossa  
+Dan Rahall. Requested by the Family

#### Next Sunday

**This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Lauri Moossa**  
**Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by**

**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

<b>Weekly</b>	<b>\$1,398</b>
<b>Candles</b>	<b>\$ 27</b>
<b>Coffee Hr.</b>	<b>\$ 13</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,561</b>

**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](http://melkite.org/appeal) or scan the QR code below:



ST MARK'S GOSPEL BEGINS its story of the Lord Jesus on the banks of the Jordan River. Its first verses introduce us to the figure of St John the Baptist whom it proclaims to be the fulfillment of two prophecies. The first prophecy is *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before you"* (Malachi 3:1). In this prophecy three characters are mentioned. The speaker is God who promises to send His messenger, whom the New Testament says is John the Baptist, and who prepares the way for the third person, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

The second prophecy quoted is Isaiah 40:3. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'" The verses that follow describe John as a dweller in the wilderness, a kind of ascetic singularly dedicated to preparing for the One who would come to usher in the Kingdom of God. The Precursor coming before the One sent by God is a sign in the Old Testament that the Messiah is at hand. All four Gospels cite this prophecy as fulfilled in John who sets the stage for the appearance of the Lord Jesus.

John prepares for the coming of Christ by calling people to repentance. He was specific in identifying the faults of his hearers. He confronted the Jewish religious elite, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who felt that they did not need to repent: *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones"* (Matthew 3:8-10). It is not enough, John told them, to be physically descended from Abraham; one must trust in God whole-heartedly as Abraham did.

The call to repentance continues in Luke's Gospel as people ask John, *"What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.' Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than what is appointed for you.' Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' So he said to them, 'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages'"* (Luke 3:10-14).

To be ready for the Messiah people in authority could not bully those over whom they had power, and no one could ignore the poor and needy.

#### **The Baptism of John**

John contrasts his own ministry with that of the Messiah in several ways. One of them concerns baptism: *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"* (Mark 1:8). Matthew and Luke have the same words but add, somewhat cryptically, "and fire."

Baptism in water was not unknown to first-century Jews. The Torah prescribes it for ritual purification in a number of cases such as contact with a corpse, discharge of blood or other fluids, or eating meat improperly slaughtered. Some people regularly immersed themselves before the high holydays. Converts to Judaism were also required to immerse themselves on joining the worshipping community. Orthodox Jews still practice these immersions today.

John had given a new twist to the ritual cleansing. His baptism was not concerned with ritual impurity but with repentance for moral failings like the faults mentioned in Mt and Lk quoted above. Also, people accepting this baptism did not immerse themselves; the rite was administered by John. Submission to the hand of the Baptizer

was an act of humility expressive of whole-hearted repentance.

#### **Prokimenon**

**Reader:** O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

**People:** O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

**Reader:** To you, O Lord, I have called: O my Rock, be not deaf to me!

**People:** O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

**Reader:** O Lord, save your people

**People:** And bless your inheritance.

**Epistle:** 2 Tm 4:5-8

#### **Alleluia**

May God have mercy on us and bless us.

**Verse:** May He let his face shine upon us and have mercy on us.

**Gospel:** Mk 1:1-8

#### **LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THEOPHANY**

**Sun 1/5 10AM –Divine Liturgy for the Sunday Before Theophany**

**Sun 1/5 Noon - Vespers for Theophany**

**Mon 1/6 6PM - Divine Liturgy for Theophany followed by the Great Blessing of Water**



#### **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](mailto:fr.bryan.mcneil@melkite.org) or call the office (508) 752-4174.**