

But the Creator saw that their wound was great and needed care. He who is Himself their Creator and healer, Jesus, thus sent forerunners before Himself. ... Those invested with the Spirit [i.e. prophets] saw that no one among the creatures could heal this great wound, but only the goodness of God, His Onlybegotten, whom He sent as salvation of the entire world. In His benevolence, and for the salvation of all, the Father of creation did not spare His Onlybegotten, but delivered Him up for our sins. He was humbled by our iniquities and by His stripes we were healed. Through the word of His power He gathered us from all lands, from one end of the earth to the other, resurrecting our hearts from the earth and teaching us that we are members of one another.

Saint Anthony the Great,
whom we commemorate on Saturday



**Sunday 11 January 2015 is the
Sunday after the
Theophany of the Lord**

Matins Gospel: John 20:19-31

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Apolytikion of Sun. after Epiphany

At Your Baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, 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 these words. O Christ God, Who appeared and enlightened the world, glory to You!

Seasonal Kontakion

You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us. With fuller understanding we sing to You: "You came, You were made manifest, the unapproachable light."

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 18:22-28; John 10:39-42
Martyr Tatiana; Martyr Mertios

Tuesday: Ephesians 6:10-17; Luke 20:1-8
Holy Martyrs Hermylus and Stratonikus; Maximos the Righteous

Wednesday: Hebrews 10:32-38; Luke 12:32-40
Apodosis of Epiphany; Agnes the Virgin-martyr

Thursday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Luke 12:32-40
John the Hut-Dweller; Paul of Thebes; Pansophios the Martyr

Friday: Acts 12:1-11; John 21:14-25
Veneration of the Chains of Ap. Peter; Righteous Makarios of Kalogerias

Saturday: Matthew 11:27-30; Hebrews 13:17-21; Luke 6:17-23
Anthony the Great; Anthony of Berropas; New Martyr George of Ioannina



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

11 January 2015

Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

Light Has Dawned

Today, on the Sunday after Theophany, we hear how, after His Baptism in the River Jordan and the arrest of Saint John the Baptist, Jesus Christ withdrew to Galilee where He began His preaching ministry. Saint Matthew tells us that this was to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah who proclaimed that those living in darkness have seen a great light.

The feast of Theophany is a feast of the Light. By coming among us in His Nativity, the light of Jesus Christ has entered into the darkness of our world, and at His Baptism in the Jordan, this light was publicly manifested to all the world. Now we see how this light begins to spread out, first in Galilee. But eventually the Light of Christ will spread, little by little, throughout the whole world.

Like Saint John the Baptist, Jesus called people to repentance, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand." Saint John had preached that the Kingdom was coming, but now, with the coming of Christ, the Kingdom is "at hand," for it is the presence of Jesus Christ that makes the Kingdom present. But it is only beginning and must continue to grow until it exists in all its fullness.

We enter the Kingdom of Heaven through repentance and this repentance is an ongoing process. But this does not simply involve a list of things that we must do or not do. Rather, it is about ourselves encountering the Light of Christ. The Church speaks of baptism as illumination, or being enlightened. It is the Light of Christ that enables us to truly see – and growing in our faith means that we become more transparent to this Light. Through ongoing purification and enlightenment, we are called to become bearers of Christ's Light so that others may also see His Light in us.



The "great light" is Christ our Lord and the brightness of the Gospel preaching.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

I Confess One Baptism

A series on the meaning of Christian Baptism

Whenever we recite the Creed, we say: "I confess one Baptism, for the forgiveness of sins." In this series that starts today, we will explore the meaning of the Mystery of Baptism, and what it means for our lives as Orthodox Christians. This will hopefully be followed by other series on the other Mysteries (or Sacraments) of the Church.

Baptism literally means "immersing in water" and the practice of baptizing is older than the Church. It was found both in the Old Testament and in pagan religions and was associated with the symbolism of "starting anew" or beginning a new way of life. It was always connected to the idea of repentance or conversion and in changing from something bad to something good. It was therefore not surprising that Saint John the Baptist is presented in the Gospel as baptizing those whom he called to conversion. Baptism was known as a symbol of repentance and Saint Mark tells us that the Forerunner preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." (1:4)



However, Saint John was also clear that his baptism was a preparation for something greater. He was simply preparing the way for:

One who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. (Mark 1:7)

With the coming of Christ, baptism took on a new meaning and significance. It was no longer simply a symbol of moral change, or of wanting to make a new beginning. Rather, it becomes the very means of our incorporation into Jesus Christ. Through it, we identify ourselves with Christ's death and resurrection. However, baptism is not only our doing, for God acts in it and gives us a "new birth by water and the Holy Spirit." (John 3:5) As Saint Paul writes:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? We were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united in a resurrection like His. ... But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. The death He died he died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God.

To be continued...

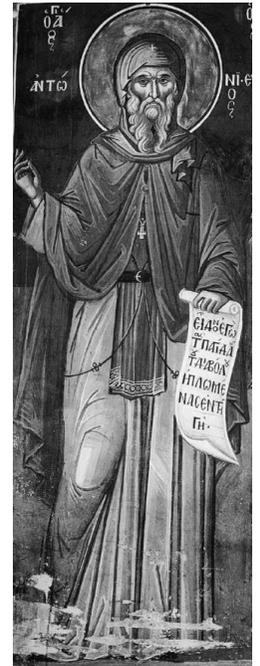
For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [Galatians 3:27] The Apostle affirms that we have become sons of God through baptism. He did not say that "as many of you as have been baptized have become sons of God," as the argument seems to require. Instead, he uttered something far more astounding: you ... have put on Christ. If we have put on Christ, the Son of God, then we have also been made like unto Him. We have been brought into a common existence with Him, becoming by grace what He is by nature. ... Each and every Christian has taken on one type and one form – not that of an angel, but of the Master Himself – revealing Christ in Himself. Therefore, we are all one in Christ Jesus. This means, inasmuch as we have one form of Christ imposed upon each of us and we are one Body, then we have one Head, which is Christ.

Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid

Saint Anthony the Great

On Saturday we commemorate Saint Anthony the Great, who was born around 251 and was one of the great saints of the African Church. He is sometimes seen as founder of monasticism because his *Life*, written by St Athanasius the Great, became very influential in different parts of the world and inspired many others to adopt a monastic life.

Saint Anthony had a devout youth and when he was about twenty years old, after the death of his parents, he heard the Gospel of St Matthew being read in Church. He heard Christ speaking to him personally the words: "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor; then come, follow me." He took this literally, gave away the family fortune, and apprenticed himself to an ascetic who was living on the outskirts of the village. He later moved into the desert itself, eventually ending up in a very remote place. This physical journey to the heart of the desert was mirrored by an inner journey in which, through many ascetic struggles and temptations, he gradually overcame his passions and became radiant with the light of Christ. Saint Athanasius describes how he emerged from a desert fortress after twenty years of solitude:



Anthony came forth as though from some shrine, having been led into divine mysteries and inspired by God. This was the first time he appeared from the fortress for those who came out to him. And when they beheld him, they were amazed to see that his body had maintained its former condition, neither fat from lack of exercise, nor emaciated from fasting and combat with demons, but was just as they had known him prior to his withdrawal. The state of his soul was one of purity, for it was not constricted by grief, nor relaxed by laughter or dejection. Moreover, when he saw the crowd, he was not annoyed any more than he was elated at being embraced by so many people. He maintained utter equilibrium, like one guided by the Logos and steadfast in that which accords with nature. Through him the Lord healed many of those present who suffered from bodily ailments; others he purged of demons, and to Antony he gave grace in speech. Thus he consoled many who mourned, and others hostile to each other he reconciled in friendship, urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world above the love of Christ.

In the desert he attracted many disciples and became known as a true father of monks and many of his teachings are preserved in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. He was also deeply loyal to the Church and left his solitude on occasion in order to support Christians who were being persecuted and to support St Athanasius in combating the Arian heresy. He reposed at the age of 105 in the presence of two of his disciples, and instructed his them to bury his body in an unknown place. Despite this, his renown extended to the ends of the earth and his *Life* inspired many others to follow his example.