

Parish Prayer List (Living)

Alexandra	Rachael	Jessilyn	Reader Mark
Andrea	Amanda	Sherry	Joretta
Fr. Michael	Barry	Sean	Susan Mary
James	Nicholas B.	Karin	Andrea & Kirby
Lawrence	Emil	Seraphim	Evdokia
Michael	Helen	Susan K	Bob Wedder
Anna	Brian	Carolyn	Monk Nicholas
Ashley & Ben	Kathy Tanner	Anthony	Pauline
Olga	Marina	Salvatore	Josephine
Nicholas (Nadja's brother)			

Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)

Josephine Urban (+12/15) Mary Louise Blomeley (+12/10)

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Words from the Fathers

I am not asking you, Baptist, that you overstep the bounds; I do not say,

‘Say to me what you say to offenders,’ nor ‘Give me the advice you give sinners.’

Simply baptize me in silence and in expectation of what will follow the baptism.

Because in this way you will gain a dignity which does not belong to angels, for I will also make you greater than all prophets.

Not one of them saw me clearly, but only in types and shadows, and dreams.

But as He stands before you by His own will, you see, you grasp the unapproachable light.

Saint Romanos the Melodist, On the Life of Christ: Kontakia, “On the Holy Theophany”

The seal of the Holy Spirit is in our heart, which bears the fruits of our life. Meekness, peace, a merciful heart, goodness, kindness, faith, and abstinence are some of the fruits of tears offered to Christ from the heart. The results of such tears are love of one’s enemies and prayers offered up to the Lord for them. Tears give us strength to be joyful even in times of great suffering and tribulation and to look upon the sins of others as our own and repent for them. Tears make it possible for us to

lay down our life for our brother.

Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica, Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives

The waters of the Jordan are sanctified, and together with them all the waters of creation, the very nature of water. Water is given power to cleanse not only the body, but also man's whole soul, and to regenerate the whole man unto a new life through Baptism. Through water all of nature is cleansed, for out of water the world was made, and moisture penetrates everywhere, giving life to everything else in nature. Without moisture neither animals nor plants can live; moisture penetrates into rocks, into every place in the world. The waters are sanctified and through them the whole world, in preparation for renewal and regeneration for God's eternal Kingdom which is to come.

Saint John of San Francisco, "A Sermon on the Day of Theophany"

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EIPHANY IN THE EASTERN CHURCH

By Rev. George Dion. Dragas Ph.D., D.D.

1. THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY. On the 6th of January Eastern Orthodox and Western Christians celebrated the great Feast of Epiphany (Western) or Theophany (Eastern). This Feast introduced a new period of liturgical celebration, which is still with us – a celebration that goes right back to Christian beginnings and opens up the meaning of the Christian faith and tradition.

Epiphany (from the Greek *epiphaneia*) means "manifestation from above," that is, "divine revelation." The Christian feast of the Epiphany primarily entails the manifestation of God in Christ, Christ being manifested as the Son of God and God as the Trinity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

What is the basis of this manifestation? Or, putting it otherwise, what is the basic event (or events) that lies at the root of this divine manifestation (Theophany)?

2. THE EASTERN AND WESTERN TRADITIONS. The Eastern Epiphany celebrates the Baptism of Christ in the River Jordan by John the Baptist or "Forerunner" (in Greek *Prodromos*) as the event of the manifestation of Christ as the Son of God and its corollary, the

manifestation of God in Trinity, and also as the event that marks the beginning of Christ's saving mission. This is particularly revealed in the service of the Great Sanctification of the Waters (*Megas Agiasmos*), which is reminiscent of Christ's Baptism and constitutes a conspicuous feature of the Eastern celebration.

The Western Epiphany celebrates the veneration of the newborn Christ by the wise Oriental Magi as the event that marks the manifestation of the divinity of Christ to the "nations." Especially since medieval times, Western Christianity developed an elaborate tradition around these Oriental figures – fixing their number to three and identifying them with three kings, called Melchior, Gaspar and Balthasar – a tradition that included the re-discovery of their bodies at the Church of St. Eustorgio in Milan (1158), where they had been transferred from Constantinople in the 4th century, and their re-transference and deposition in Cologne Cathedral by Frederick Barbarossa (1164).

3. THE EASTERN TRADITION. Scholars tell us that, in the Christian East, Epiphany is the oldest Feast of the Lord next to Pascha, and was always celebrated on the 6th of January. The first reference to Epiphany is found in Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century AD. If Pascha marked the climax of the saving work of Christ, Epiphany marked the disclosure of the divine person of Christ who opened up the mystery of God and initiated the process of man's salvation. Originally Epiphany commemorated the Baptism of Christ, his Birth being at best included implicitly. St. John Chrysostom explains the reasons for being so. "Why is not the day on which Christ was born called Epiphany, but the day on which he was baptized? Because he was not manifested to all when he was born, but when he was baptized" (Hom. 24 *On the Baptism of Christ*). In some places, however, not only the Birth but also some additional events from the life of Christ were included in the celebration of Epiphany (e.g. Christ's first miracle at Cana).

What is particularly interesting to observe is that in the early Christian centuries the eve of Epiphany, Pascha and Pentecost (and Christmas later on) were the solemn occasions of Christian initiation through Baptism. The remnant of this practice is today the singing of the Baptismal Hymn in the Divine Liturgy celebrated on these days: "As many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia." It was in the fourth century that the Birth of Christ began to be commemorated as a separate Feast on the 25th of December leaving Epiphany focused on Christ's Baptism and celebrated on the 6th of January as it is still today. There is evidence that the Feast of Christmas as a separate Feast was first introduced in Rome (around 335) and was gradually adopted by the Eastern Churches (from 376 onwards).

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FEAST. The establishment of Christmas did not diminish the importance of Epiphany, which is denoted by the time-span of its celebration. It is celebrated from the 2nd to the 14th of January. The 6th of January is the principal Day of the Feast. The four days preceding it constitute the fore-feast (*proeortia*) and the 8 days after it the after-feast (*metheortia*). The fore-feast is shorter because of the celebration of the circumcision of Christ (8th century onwards) on the 1st of January (which is also St. Basil's feast day); but it includes an elaborate celebration on the eve of the Feast like Christmas and Pascha. The after-feast includes the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist (January 7th), the Sunday after Epiphany and the Return (*Apodosis*) of the Feast (January 14th).

The profound meaning of the Feast is revealed in the many and wonderful hymns that are sung on it and the biblical readings. There are two characteristic hymns that summarize this meaning perfectly: The "Apolytikion" and the "Kontakion." They recall how at Christ's Baptism he was declared to be God's beloved Son in whom God is well pleased and on whom God's Spirit rests (Matth. 3:17), and how this revelation constitutes an event of divine enlightenment and illumination.

"When in Jordan you were baptized, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bare witness to you, calling you his beloved Son, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the steadfastness of the word. O Christ, who did manifest yourself, and who does enlighten the world, Glory to you." (Apolytikion)

"You have manifested yourself today to the whole world and Your light, O Lord, was shown upon us, who praise you with understanding: You have come and manifested yourself as Light unapproachable." (Kontakion)

Finally, the Great Sanctification of the waters, which is observed twice, on the eve and on the day of the Feast, brings out the message of salvation. "Christ was not baptized in order to be sanctified but to sanctify the waters and through them grant divine sanctification to all humanity" (Gregory Thaumaturgos). This is exactly the gift that is granted to all human beings when they are baptized into Christ. Baptism joins human beings to Christ, granting them remission of sins and eternal life through the sanctifying grace of God. The Holy Water blessed at Epiphany is a great blessing that is much treasured by the Orthodox who use it to renew (re-consecrate) themselves and their physical environment.