



The Prophet

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Services

The major feast in January is **Theophany** or as it usually called **The Baptism of the Lord** on January 6.

The interesting action that the Church takes is to bless water. In some places the ocean, rivers and lakes are blessed. We, however, will use our stainless steel containers. The water which is blessed can be taken home and use the blessed water for drinking especially when someone is ill.

And don't forget to bring your water containers.

Installation of Officers

As is our parish custom, the Prayer of a Parish Council will be said on **January 7th**.

Blessing of Water

Sometimes people think that the blessing of water and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it over everyone and everything is a "paganism" which has falsely entered the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God in the Old Testament, and that in the Christian Church it has a very special and important significance.

It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God

has taken human flesh and has been immersed in the streams of the Jordan, all matter is sanctified and made pure in Him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the wickedness of men. In the Lord's epiphany all creation becomes good again, indeed "very good," the way that God Himself made it and proclaimed it to be in the beginning when "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Gen 1.2) and when the "Breath of Life" was breathing in man and in everything that God made (Gen 1.30; 2.7).

The world and everything in it is indeed "very good" (Gen 1.31) and when it becomes polluted, corrupted and dead, God saves it once more by effecting the "new creation" in Christ, his divine Son and our Lord by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Gal 6.15). This is what is celebrated on Epiphany, particularly in the Great Blessing of Water. The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world—through its "prime element" of watering the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit. It tells us that man and the world were indeed created and saved in order to be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3.19), the "fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1.22). It tells us that Christ, in Who in "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," is and shall be truly "all, and in all" (Col 2.9, 3.11). It tells us as well that the "new heavens and the new earth" which God has promised through His prophets and apostles (Is 66.2; 2 Peter 3.13; Rev 21.1) are truly "with us" already now in the mystery of Christ and His Church.

Thus, the sanctification and sprinkling of the Epiphany water is no pagan ritual. It is the expression of the most central fact of the Christian vision of man, his life and his world. It is the liturgical testimony that the vocation and destiny of creation is to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19).

Fr Thomas Hopko

Blessing of Homes

Since a home cannot come to church to be blessed, the Church goes to the home. It is the custom for the priest to go to the home to bless it as part of creation which needs to be sanctified. He blesses the entire home praying grace may descend upon and into the home and all who dwell therein.

Having written that, over the past 15 or so years it has become more and more difficult to arrange a time to bless each home.

Some of the reasons are quite natural extensions of the society in which we live. For example, people live further from each other. At one time Mr. Sapp and I could park our car and walk and bless up to a dozen homes in a relatively short amount of time. It's not so any more. People work different times of the day. They work different times of the week.

Another reason, and this is a personal one, is that I can no longer drive at night.. Additionally and unfortunately, more and more people simply don't care if their home be blessed. Therefore, beginning this year, I will bless a home only by appointment. This makes it easier and more practical for everyone.

If you wish to have your home blessed, contact me either by phone (724-745-8216) or by e-mail (padre0522@aol.com). Please don't try to schedule a time in church 'venerating the cross' or at coffee hour. Too many people tend to speak at the same time. Of course the weather plays an important part in this. Also, if I can arrange a driver for a specific evening blessing, I will gladly accommodate you.

Again, I am willing to bless anyone's home. It just needs to be scheduled.

Did you know...

that through your efforts as volunteers and supporters, the following monies have been deposited into Growth and Development for payment of our mortgage:

\$ 1,519 - Clothing Resale

\$10,000 - Dinner a Week Raffle

\$ 2,430 - July 4th Celebration

\$ 6,141 - Basket Party

Also, the October Special Projects Tickets netted \$11,050 to offset monthly expenses of the Church.

Thank you all!