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Shepherd

Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego



Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego



For as many of
you as were
Baptized into Christ
have put on Christ
(GAL. 3:27).



From the desk of

FATHER ANDREW

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has taken place. *Christ is born, let us glorify Him.* The next major feast day of the Church, you and I, will celebrate is the Baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We celebrate the Lord's Baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist annually on January 6th. This profound event is called *Holy Epiphany*, which means manifestation or appearance (of God). On that blessed day God revealed Himself as a Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. From the Gospel of Matthew 3:13-17 and Luke 3:21;22, we are reminded of that reality. From those Gospels we hear the voice of the God the Father; God the Son is *Baptized*; and God the Holy Spirit *descends like a dove*. Hence, the time of Christ's Baptism is one event where the manifestation of God as a Trinity is revealed to those who have ears to hear. An Epiphany took place that day as Jesus was publicly proclaimed as God the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. We must be clear however; *Jesus does not become the Son of God this day; rather, in His baptism the eternal Son of God is revealed to all humanity.*

Saint Gregory of Nyssa reminds us *Jesus enters the sinful waters of the world and when He comes out; He brings up or purifies the entire world with Him.* In other words, He sanctified the waters and purified them so that we could use them as a means toward our sanctification and salvation. Through our Baptism we are sanctified, purified and set apart. Set apart for what? As Jesus began His earthly ministry after His Baptism, likewise, we begin our spiritual journey and ministry after our Baptism. Our Baptism marks us as Orthodox Christians, and we become...*God's own (special) people, zealous for good works* (Titus 2:14). This verse follows what I Peter 2:9; 10 has to say about what we become after Baptism: *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, so that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.*

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, from Romans 3:23 we are reminded...*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* In other words, at our Baptisms we were made clean but as time goes by our Baptismal waters may have become *muddied*. Epiphany is one of the many times that we as Orthodox Christians *revisit our Baptisms*. Through the *drinking and sprinkling* of the waters blessed through the services for the *Blessing of the Waters* (offered on the day of Epiphany: Jan. 6th) we are given the opportunity to be made clean, to be purified, to be sanctified and set apart, to restart our spiritual journeys, which may have been derailed for whatever reason and/or because of sin.

This year January 6th falls on a Wednesday. After the celebration of the Divine Liturgy we will offer up our prayers and ask God to *bless the waters*. On that day, we will ask the same Holy Spirit that was present at Jesus' baptism to be present with us. We will ask the same Holy Spirit to bless, purify and sanctify the waters so that the blessings of God may descend upon us. On that day we will pray *that the water may become for us a gift of sanctification, and deliverance of sins, for the healing of soul and body, that it (the water) may be for the averting of every snare of the enemy, those seen and unseen; for all those who draw of it and take it for the sanctification of their homes, let us pray to the Lord.*

The tradition of the Church following Epiphany is to invite the priest to bless your home. The priest brings with him the *previously blessed water* and *marks* you and your home. Through the *drinking and sprinkling* of the blessed waters, the household is sanctified (set apart) and takes part in God's blessings mentioned above. *Χρόνια Πολλά!* Many good years to you and your family in the New Year. ❀