

# The Confessor's Tongue for January 6, A. D. 2013

## Holy Theophany of Our Lord

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

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### January 6: The Theophany of Christ

Luminous was the feast which hath passed [Nativity], yet even more glorious is this present day; for on the former the magi worshipped the Savior, but on this a glorious servant hath baptized the Master. Then the shepherds, piping, beheld and marvelled; but now, the voice of the Father hath proclaimed the only-begotten Son.

*Vespers Aposticha for January 2*

The meaning of each Feast and each Mystery is found in its hymns. Thus, we learn that Theophany is even greater than Nativity (contrary to the emphasis of our culture which makes Christmas the feast of feasts, pays no heed at all to Theophany/Epiphany, and reduces Holy Pascha (Easter) to one Sunday). At the Nativity of Christ, we celebrate the birth of the God-man in the flesh. At the Theophany, we celebrate the manifestation of not only Christ's divinity but also the first manifestation to man of the Holy Trinity as the Forerunner, the Father, and the Spirit all bear witness to Christ as the Son and Lamb of God. Christ sanctifies the waters through His Baptism for our regeneration. The sinless One who needs no cleansing receives baptism from the hand of a servant for our cleansing. Let us rejoice in the Feast!

We celebrate Theophany through its leavetaking on January 14. We use the troparion and kontakion of the Feast in our daily prayers and at meals in place of the usual "Our Father" and "We give thanks..."

#### Theophany, Troparion, tone 1

When Thou, O Lord wast baptized in the Jordan /  
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. / For  
the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, /  
naming Thee His beloved Son. / And the Spirit, in  
the form of dove, / confirmed the certainty of that  
word. / O Christ our God, who hast manifested  
Thyself and enlightened the world // glory to Thee.

#### Theophany, Kontakion, tone 4

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe / and Thy  
Light, O Lord, hath shone on us, / who with  
understanding praise Thee: / Thou hast come and  
revealed Thyself, // O Light unapproachable!

#### On The Holy Water

Let all be aware concerning the Holy Water: those who abstain from drinking the Holy Water because they have eaten are not acting correctly; for the Holy Water has been provided by the grace of God for the sanctification of the world and all creation. Wherefore, it is sprinkled in all places, even dishonorable ones, and even in places where it may be trodden underfoot. Where, then, is the logic in abstaining from it? But be aware that impurity comes upon us not because of eating, but because of our

abominable acts; and that we may be cleansed from them, we drink this Holy Water without doubting.

Christ through His Baptism has sanctified the nature of water. For this reason, on the Eve of the Feast, after the blessing of the water, we take some home and keep it throughout the year, making regular use of it. The day of sanctifying the waters becomes a clear sign of God's grace, for the nature of these waters is not spoiled for a long time, but it endures for a whole year or two, or three, or many years. Today the waters that are drawn remain fresh and new and after an extended time is as on the day in which it was drawn.

By pious custom, the blessed waters of Theophany are taken home after the Great Blessing of Waters for the spiritual refreshment of soul and body and the sanctification of our dwellings. The water is drunk every day from the Feast (Jan 6) through its leavetaking (Jan 14). At other times, when we cannot come to church, or when we feel ill, are embarking upon a journey, are especially tempted, etc., we should resort to these blessed waters, partaking of them with prayer and deep faith.

Holy Water is kept in the church throughout the year for the faithful to take home as needed. Old Holy Water may be disposed of by pouring it out on plants. It should not be poured down the drain.

#### The Great Blessing of Water

*Fr. Alexander Schmemmann*

To bless water, making it "holy water," may have two entirely different meanings. It may mean, on the one hand, the transformation of something *profane*, and thus religiously void or neutral, into something *sacred*, in which case the main religious meaning of "holy Water" is precisely that it is no longer "mere" water, and is in fact opposed to it—as the sacred is to the profane. Here the act of blessing reveals nothing about water, and thus about matter or world, but on the contrary makes them irrelevant to the new function of water as "holy water." The sacred posits the profane as precisely profane, i.e., religiously meaningless.

On the other hand, the same act of blessing may mean the revelation of the true "nature" and "destiny" of water, and thus of the world—it may be the epiphany and the fulfillment of their "sacramentality." By being restored through the blessing to its proper function, the "holy water" is revealed as the true, full, adequate water, and matter becomes again means of communion with and knowledge of God.

Now anyone who is acquainted with the content and text of the great prayer of blessing of water—at Baptism and Theophany—knows without any doubt that they belong to the second of the two meanings

mentioned above, that their term of reference is not the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, but the "sacramental" potentiality of creation in its totality, as well as in each of its elements. *For the Life of the World, "Worship in a Secular Age"*

### Kathismata at Sunday Matins

For those who may wonder what is going on: During the Matins portion of our Saturday night Vigil, two kathismata from the Psalter are appointed to be read (after "God is the Lord" and the troparia of the day), the second and the third (Psalms 9-23). For a number of years, we have read a fixed portion of this reading, the second stasis of the second kathismata (Psalms 11-13). To give worshippers at Vigil exposure to the full contents of these appointed kathismata, we have resumed our practice of six or more years ago of rotating the stasis that is read. With one stasis read each week, the worshipper will hear the entirety of the second and third kathismatas read in church every six weeks instead of hearing the same three (short) psalms read every week.

### Prayer for Our Land

At every service, we pray "For this God-protected land, its president, all civil authorities, and for those who serve in the armed forces." A form of this petition used in some augmented litanies and in Moliebens adds the Biblical reason: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honest."

Our land needs our prayers more than ever. Our American people are spiritually sick in many ways. Our sins are many, and our repentance, if any, is weak. There is no fear of God or of His just judgment, which will indeed come if we do not repent, and which, I fear is already upon us. God's desire is always that people should repent, but if they do not, their sin attracts yet greater judgment and, eventually, destruction.

I was struck reading Lamentations this week, written by the great Prophet Jeremiah to express his sorrow over the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of God's people in a foreign land. The people had rebelled against God's word, and worshipped other Gods, had rejected the true prophets and solaced themselves with the lies of false prophets, and had refused to repent. The siege and sack brought horrors on the people: starvation, death by the sword, mothers eating their children, rape, captivity, and slavery. The majority died. A remnant only remained.

Yet in the midst of this great distress, Jeremiah looks to God in hope, asserting that his mercy never fails, His faithfulness is great, He is good to those who wait for Him. The Lord will not cast off forever; He will have compassion, for He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. But men bring judgment upon themselves for their own chosen sins: "Why should a living man complain, a man about the punishment of his sins?"

God's goodness provides the ground to support the Prophet's call to the remnant: "Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord! Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven: We have transgressed and rebelled."

I dare say that our country is already under relatively mild judgment with our lengthening economic downturn, but I fear that things will get worse for everyone if we do not repent for our own sins and pray in repentance and intercession for our land. "If My people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Remember that Christians, the members of Christ's body, are salt and light in this corrupt world, salt to preserve what would otherwise rot and light to dispel the darkness of sin. Sodom, wicked as she was, had been spared would only ten righteous persons have been found in her.

Our fervent repentance our sins and intercessions for the sins of our people may well turn away worse judgment. We delude ourselves if we think we can live in complacency without repentance saying "peace and safety" when there is none but by God's blessing. Let us pray fervently to the Lord this year, and may our merciful Lord have mercy on us and on our land!

### January Namedays

1 Geoff Stevenson, Basil Birthisel, Vasilios Colias (St. Basil); 7 John V. Colias (St. John the Baptist); 10 Rick Joines (St. Gregory of Nyssa); 12 Tatiana Garner, 12 Tatiana Tabet (Martyr Tatiana); 14 Nina Sylantyeva (St. Nina of Georgia); 17 Dax Stokes, Colin Stokes, Antonia Colias (St. Anthony the Great); 24 Pamela Ward (St. Xenia of St. Petersburg); 31 Ash Davis (New Martyr Elias)

### January Birthdays

3 Ben Lyda, 4 Sandra Pascale, 9 Isabel Stone., Daniel Birthisel; 21 Katherine Frederick (2002), 24 Christopher Jones, Olive Betz (2010), Elijah Brown (2011), 25 Anya Brown (2008)

### Upcoming Events 2012-2013

20-21 January: Feast of St. Maximus with John Granger. Talk on St. Maximus Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 p.m.; Talk for Youth "Why Reading Matters: Great Books, Popular Literature, and the Life in Christ?" ('Harry Potter, Bella Swan, Katniss Everdeen and the Life in Christ?'), Monday, January 21, 11:30 a.m.  
17 March: Forgiveness Vespers, 6:00 p.m.  
5 May: Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!