

We read about the Baptism of Christ in the Gospels:

The Gospel of Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The Gospel of Mark 1:9-11

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

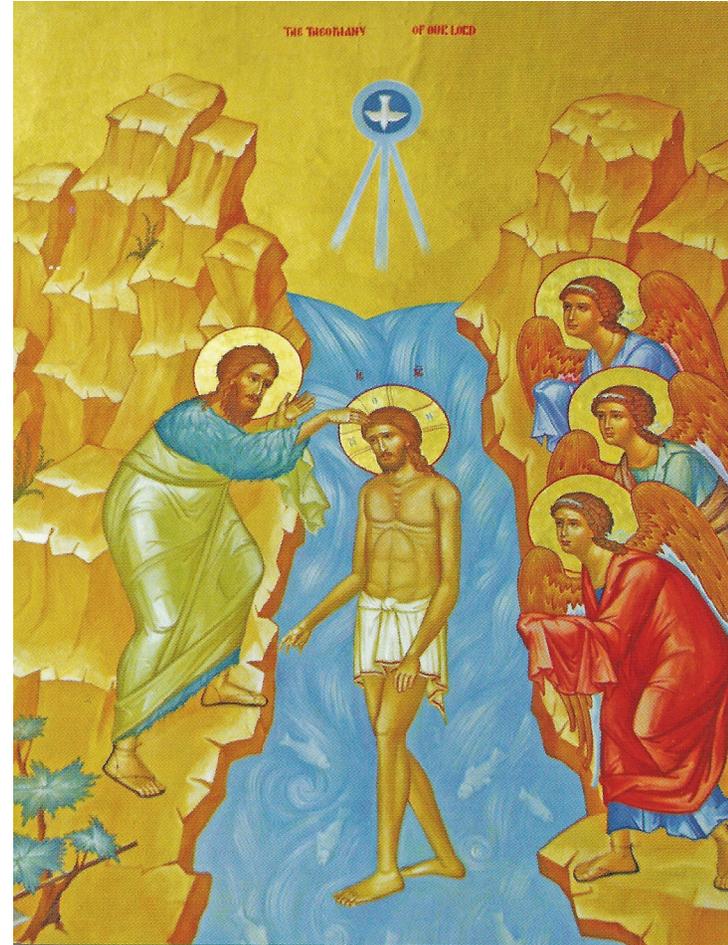
Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The Gospel of Luke 3:21-22

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”

Theophany



Troparion - Tone 1

When You, O Lord were baptized in the Jordan
The worship of the Trinity was made manifest
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You
And called You His beloved Son.

And the Spirit, in the form of a dove,
Confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ, our God, You have revealed Yourself
And have enlightened the world, glory to Thee!

THEOPHANY

“As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ”
(Galatians 3:27).

Theophany is the Feast Day that **revealed the Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of Christ:**

God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son.
Christ, the Son was baptized by St. John the Forerunner.
The Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove.

The celebration of the Feast of Theophany began at the time of the Apostles. In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens (converts to the faith) at the Vespers of Theophany. This Feast is also called the **“Day of Illumination”** and the **“Feast of Lights,”** because God is Light, and Christ was Incarnate (became man) to illumine (enlighten) “those who sat in darkness.”

St. John of Damascus said that Christ was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but
“to bury human sin by water,”
to fulfill the Law (as foretold by the Prophets in Scripture),
to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity,
to sanctify “the nature of water” and
to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast Theophany, the Church:

- proclaims our faith in **One God in three Persons**,
- shows that the **Holy Trinity is one in Essence and Indivisible**,
- explains the necessity of **Baptism for believers in Christ**, and
- inspires us with **gratitude** for the purification of our sins.

The Divine Services for Theophany include the blessing of water. The water is then used to bless the church and our homes, and to bless us too! On the day of Theophany, there is no fasting, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.

In many Orthodox countries, entire rivers or lakes or even seas are blessed. In Greece, after the water is blessed the Priest throws a cross into the sea and young persons dive for it. In some places in Russia, a hole in the shape of a cross is chopped through the ice, the water is blessed, and people wearing only bathing suits jump in!

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Another name for the Feast Day of the Baptism of Christ:
 - A. Day of Illumination
 - B. Feast of Lights
 - C. Theophany
 - D. All of the above
2. Christ was baptized by:
 - A. God the Father
 - B. St. John the Forerunner
 - C. Angels
 - D. Himself
3. For Orthodox Christians, baptism signifies:
 - A. Spiritual illumination
 - B. Belief in One God in three Persons
 - C. Membership in the Church
 - D. All of the above
4. On the day of Theophany, what foods are we permitted to eat:
 - A. Only fish and vegetables
 - B. All foods, unless it is a Friday
 - C. There is no fasting, even if it is a Wednesday or Friday
 - D. No food, only the blessed water
5. The Holy Spirit came from heaven in the form of:
 - A. An angel
 - B. A dove
 - C. A burning bush
 - D. A cross
6. Where was Christ baptized?
 - A. In the Mediterranean Sea
 - B. In a lake in Kiev, Ukraine
 - C. In the Jordan River
 - D. In the Red Sea
7. Another word for “illumined” is:
 - A. Confirmed
 - B. Trusted
 - C. Permitted
 - D. Enlightened