

Theophany

There was a fad awhile back, mainly among Protestant Christians, to wear a bracelet with the letters WWJD, which stands for What Would Jesus Do. This was to always remind a person in whatever situation they find themselves in to think What Would Jesus Do and to choose to do that. Well, looking at the life of Jesus, at the beginning of His ministry, one of the first things that Jesus does is He gets baptized. So, we too, as followers of Christ, one of the first things we should want to do in our lives is be baptized, as well. Then, also, the Holy Spirit will descend upon us, like He did at Christ's baptism. We receive the Holy Spirit when the priest anoints us with Chrism after coming up out of the waters of baptism. Then there is nothing to prevent us from receiving Holy Communion and coming into the fullness of union with Christ. These Holy Mysteries of Initiation mark the beginning of our life in Christ.

The typicon that specifies how the liturgical services are to be celebrated each day tells us that Theophany is to be celebrated with the same solemnity and services as the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas). Both feast days mark a new beginning, Heaven descending to Earth at the Nativity of our Lord and Earth being raised up to Heaven in Holy Baptism. With Christ's descent into the waters, He sanctified the nature of water, so that it would now open up the gates of Heaven to those who follow Christ's example and are baptized. So, the Nativity of our Lord and Theophany both celebrate new births, in one, the birth of Jesus, and in the other our birth into new life in Christ, through our baptism, following Jesus's example.

Today's feast day is also a revelation of God as Trinity. Jesus, the Son of God is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and God the Father speaks saying, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This is how the feast gets its name Theophany, which means appearance or revelation of God. Let us then on this feast of Theophany recommit ourselves to our baptismal promises to live our life in union with Christ, that we too may hear those words of our Heavenly Father, "You are my beloved Son" or "You are my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased."