

WEEKLY MEDITATION

FOREFEAST OF THE THEOPHANY

Theophany comes from the Greek term *theophaneia*. The first part - from *theos* - means God. The second part - from *phainein* - means to reveal, to make an appearance, to make clear or obvious. On this day we celebrate one of the important manifestations of Jesus Christ to the world: at His baptism, our Lord is revealed as God, one of the Holy Trinity, the incarnate Word and Son of God.

There are many theophanies in scripture. In the Old Testament there are manifestations of the presence of God in such stories as, for example, Moses and the Burning Bush, in the accounts of the Glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle and the temple, in the still, small voice that came to Elijah. In the Gospels the theophanies take on an intensely personal focus in our Lord Jesus Christ. In His person, in His entire life, death and resurrection, the eyes of faith are opened to discern God revealing Himself to us. In our encounter with Jesus through the Gospel stories, in our reading and in liturgical proclamation, we come to the realization that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and we apprehend that He is the full and perfect manifestation and presence of God with us.

Among the ways in which Jesus is the unique theophany of God, we highlight a number of stories as of particular significance: His nativity, the coming of the wise men, His baptism, His first miracle at Cana of Galilee, His public preaching, His Transfiguration, His Resurrection and post-Resurrection appearances.

This week we will celebrate the Baptism of Christ as a public manifestation of Him as God, the God-man, the Son of God made flesh, in Whom the Father is well-pleased, one of the Holy Trinity, Who together with the Father - *the voice of the Father* - and the Holy Spirit - *in the form of a dove* - is worthy of all praise and worship and glory. His Baptism is presented to us in our hymns and verses as a renewal and sanctification of all creation. Our blessing of holy water is part of the ongoing ministry of the sanctification of world. The extension of the blessing of holy water by our drinking it and blessing things with it, and especially by bringing it into our homes, is an affirmation of our participation in this cosmic healing and the transforming power of Grace in our lives.