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Web Page: www.holyfamilyucc.com

Sunday Divine Liturgies: 9:00 am - English / 10:15 am - Ukrainian

Weekday Divine Liturgies: 8:00 am or 9:00 am or 7:00 pm - Holy Days Liturgy: 9:00 am or Previous Day at 7:00 pm

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CHURCH BULLETIN – ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК

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The Feast of Theophany



The Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany) commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. We know from the troparion of the day that "the Trinity was made manifest" to us. But there's more to it than this. "When Jesus descends into the depths of the river, there occurs a profound upheaval. It is not the one baptized who is purified, for he is spotless; but it is the water that is transfigured and illumined. This water, which was believed to be transparent and purifying, is in fact polluted, inhabited by evil spirits, servants of the old gods. ... By purifying the elements, by sanctifying matter, Jesus frees the cosmos from the powers of evil." (*The Incarnate God*, Vol. 1, Catherine Aslanoff, French edition editor, translated by Paul Meyendorff, p.163.)

The Great Blessing of Water and the Home

The Great Blessing of Water takes place at the end of that day's Liturgy. Since our homes cannot be brought to the Church, the Church - through the priest and cantor - go to the homes. There the service of blessing, which began in the church, is finished with the sprinkling of water in the home. Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany. By sanctifying our living quarters, our private place, we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings. We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life. "There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany Day."

Please Note: What "Catholic" Means? Greek roots of the term "Catholic" mean "according to (kata-) the whole (holos)," or more colloquially, "universal." At the beginning of the second century, we find in the letters of Ignatius the first surviving use

of the term "Catholic" in reference to the Church. At that time, or shortly thereafter, it was used to refer to a single, visible communion, separate from others. Included in the quotes below are extracts from the first creeds to use the term "Catholic"; so that the term can be seen in its historical context, which is supplied by the other quotations.

Ignatius of Antioch: "Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop or by one whom he ordains [i.e., a presbyter]. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2 [A.D. 110]).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp: "And of the elect, he was one indeed, the wonderful martyr Polycarp, who in our days was an apostolic and prophetic teacher, bishop of the Catholic Church in Smyrna. For every word which came forth from his mouth was fulfilled and will be fulfilled" (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 16:2 [A.D. 155]).

The Muratorian Canon: "Besides these [letters of Paul] there is one to Philemon, and one to Titus, and two to Timothy, in affection and love, but nevertheless regarded as holy in the Catholic Church, in the ordering of churchly discipline. There is also one [letter] to the Laodiceans and another to the Alexandrians, forged under the name of Paul, in regard to the heresy of Marcion, and there are several others which cannot be received by the Church, for it is not suitable that gall be mixed with honey. The epistle of Jude, indeed, and the two ascribed to John are received by the Catholic Church (*Muratorian fragment* [A.D. 177]).

Tertullian: "Where was [the heretic] Marcion, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus, the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago—in the reign of Antonius for the most part—and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherius, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren, they were more than once expelled" (*Demurrer Against the Heretics* 30 [A.D. 200]).

Council of Nicaea I: "But those who say: 'There was [a time] when he [the Son] was not,' and 'before he was born, he was not,' and 'because he was made from non-existing matter, he is either of another substance or essence,' and those who call 'God the Son of God changeable and mutable,' these the Catholic Church anathematizes" (*Appendix to the Creed of Nicaea* [A.D. 325])

Theophany of the Lord

CHRIST IS BAPTIZED! IN THE JORDAN!

Those are the words we greet one another with on this Major Feast Day in Eastern Churches. And for us, Theophany is all about Divine revelation. Theophany in the Byzantine Catholic Church is a fixed (immovable date) Holy Day of obligation on January 6.

Our Eastern liturgical calendar is the same it has always been in the celebration of feasts since the early centuries of the Church:

Theophany follows in succession: the Nativity of Our Lord (December 25), the Synaxis of the Theotokos (December 26), St. Stephen Protomartyr (December 27), and the Circumcision of Our Lord & Commemoration of St. Basil the Great Archbishop (January 1).



Icon of the Theophany of Our Lord in St. Michael

Church, Pittston

This holy day is one of the earliest Great Feasts of the Church, dating back to the 2nd century, with a significance attributed to it greater than Christmas. In Eastern churches, the feast commemorates Christ's baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. The literal translation of the word *Theophany* is manifestation of God from the Greek form "Theos". It is the manifestation of Christ's Divinity in the revelation of the Holy Trinity. This is profoundly held as the doctrine of the Trinity and is what identifies all Christians as "Christian". To be known as Christian is to affirm the Triune nature of God. Theophany in the Eastern churches is associated with spiritual enlightenment, renewal of all creation, and most importantly, the sanctification of the Jordan water, as in the water for all to be saved through baptism. Baptism is victory over the darkness of sin, in which the elements of light and water are the visible outward symbols of spiritual illumination, purification and cleansing. An alternate name sometimes used interchangeably with Theophany is *Epiphany*. This also refers to a manifestation, in this case the prefix "epi" meaning above, as manifestation from above, derived from the Greek language. The primary focus of Epiphany in the Latin rite differs from the primary focus of Epiphany or Theophany in the Eastern rite. These differences evolved in the early centuries of the Catholic Church. The term *Epiphany* is mainly associated in the Latin rite church with the appearance of the Magi to the Christ Child. Thereby, many simply refer to the feast as "Three Kings". The Roman Catholic church in current practice in the United States celebrates Epiphany on the Sunday between Jan 2 and Jan 8.

The Eastern churches have retained the original form of the feast (Christ's baptism) as an immovable feast, celebrated always on January 6. January 5 is always a day of fast in the Eastern rite. Eastern churches have never adapted the United States custom of moving holy days or feast days to Sundays. Holy days and feast days continue to be celebrated on the exact liturgical calendar date. Among the church fathers, St. John Chrysostom and St. Clement of Alexandria refer to Theophany in association with Christ's baptism. It is interesting to note

that at one time both the Nativity and Baptism of Christ were celebrated together on January 6; then later in development the feasts were separated with the Nativity moving to December 25. Theophany is a holy day that reminds us of our eternal salvation and the solid foundations of our faith. We hear the words chanted in the Gospel reading of Matthew 3:16: "After Jesus was baptized, he came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him. With that, a voice from the heavens said, 'This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on Him.'"

It is a tradition in Byzantine Catholic and Orthodox churches to bless water on the Vigil of the Feast of Theophany and sometimes on the Holy Day itself. The blessing takes place after Divine Liturgy and the elaborate and poetic prayers recited by the priest invoke the Holy Spirit to sanctify and purify the water being blessed. Afterwards the priest blesses all the faithful present and the entire church. Faithful are invited to consume the blessed water with faith, and to take water home for reverent use and to bless their homes. It is traditional in the Carpatho-Rusyn tradition to bless a nearby river or stream as Christ sanctified all earthly waters and that of the Jordan with his baptism. Another Carpatho-Rusyn tradition following the Feast of Theophany is for the faithful to request to have their homes blessed by the parish priest. And in many ways this is supportive of a reference by St. John Chrysostom to the home as a little church. All of these traditions and blessings, when viewed through the eyes of faith, are tangible means of affirming our belief in the Holy Trinity and God's ability to transform us. Excerpt from the Great Blessing of Water (by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, 634-638) For the complete words of this service, credits to the Metropolitan Cantor Institute of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, Byzantine Seminary:

THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATER

Today is the time of feasting, and the ranks of saints and angels have joined us in celebration

Today the grace of the all-holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove comes down upon the waters

Today shines the Sun that never sets, and the world sparkles with the light of the Lord!

Today the moon is bright, together with the earth in the glowing radiance of its beams

Today the brilliant stars adorn the universe with the splendor of their twinkling

Today the clouds from heaven shed upon the human race a shower of justice

Today the Uncreated One willingly permits the hands of his creatures to be laid upon him

Today the Prophet and Forerunner approaches the Lord and, standing before him in awe, witnesses the condescension of God towards us

Today through the presence of the Lord, the waters of the river Jordan are changed into remedies

Today the whole universe is refreshed with mystical streams

Today the sins of the human race are blotted out by the waters of the river Jordan

Today paradise as been opened to all, and the Sun of Righteousness has shone upon us

Today, at the hands of Moses, the bitter water is changed into sweetness by the presence of the Lord!

Christ is Baptized! In the Jordan!

(Take it from St. Michael the Archangel Byzantine Catholic Church, Pittston, Pennsylvania)

DID YOU KNOW THAT CATHOLICS HAVE MARRIED PRIESTS?

(A Truth Many Protestants Don't Expect to Hear)

When some Protestants argue that the Catholic Church “forbids priests to marry” and therefore fulfills the prophecy of 1 Timothy 4:1–3 (“forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats”), they usually don’t realize one important reality:

The Catholic Church actually HAS married priests — right now. Not historically... but today.

Let’s break this open.

1. **Celibacy Is a Discipline (Not Doctrine) — Only in the Latin Rite**

The Catholic Church is made up of 24 rites.

Only ONE of them — the Latin (Roman) Rite — requires priestly celibacy as a discipline.

A discipline:

- ✓ is changeable
- ✓ is practical, not doctrinal
- ✓ is chosen, not forced

And the strongest scriptural witnesses for celibacy?

St. Paul himself was unmarried.

> *“I say to the unmarried and widows: it is good for them to remain as I am.” — 1 Corinthians 7:8*

Paul was also a priest, since he refers to his ministry as a priestly service:

> *“...ministering as a priest the gospel of God...”*

— *Romans 15:16*

Jesus Himself was not married — and He is the High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 4:14).

So if being unmarried is “forbidding marriage,” then are Jesus and Paul guilty of the heresy mentioned in 1 Timothy?

Of course not.

Being unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom is biblical, holy, and Christ-like.

2. **Eastern Catholics Have Married Priests**

There are 23 Eastern Catholic Churches united with Rome (Maronite, Melkite, Syro-Malabar, Ukrainian Greek Catholic, Chaldean, etc.).

And in ALL these churches:

- ✓ Married men can become priests
- ✓ They have been doing it for centuries
- ✓ Rome recognizes and blesses it

Married priesthood is normal in the East.

So clearly, the Catholic Church does NOT forbid marriage.

3. **Ordinariates Have Married Catholic Priests — Former Anglicans**

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI established the Personal Ordinariates (*Anglicanorum Coetibus*), welcoming Anglican converts into full communion with Rome.

And many of them were married.

Rome ordained them as Catholic priests — with their families.

Today, Ordinariate parishes in the U.S., U.K., Australia and beyond are joyfully served by married Catholic priests.

4. **What About 1 Timothy 4:1–3?**

St. Paul warns about false teachers:

> *“...forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats...” — 1 Timothy 4:1–3*

Some Protestants try to apply this to Catholic celibacy.

But here’s the shocking truth:

This verse refers to the ancient Gnostic heresy.

Gnostics taught:

- ✗ Marriage was evil
 - ✗ Sex was impure
 - ✗ The body was dirty
 - ✗ Eating meat was spiritually corrupt
- The Catholic Church condemned this.

The Church has never taught that marriage is sinful or forbidden.

If it did, it could not:

- ordain married Eastern Catholic priests
- ordain married Ordinariate priests
- uphold the Sacrament of Matrimony
- proclaim marriage as holy

5. **Celibacy = A Free Gift, Not a Prohibition**

Priestly celibacy in the Latin Rite is:

- ✓ freely chosen
 - ✓ rooted in Scripture
 - ✓ patterned after Jesus and St. Paul
 - ✓ a discipline for ministry — NOT a ban on marriage
- Jesus was unmarried.

Paul was unmarried.

Catholic celibate priests follow their example.

So the claim that celibacy “forbids marriage” collapses immediately.

Conclusion: The Anti-Catholic Argument Falls Apart

The idea that Catholics fulfill 1 Timothy 4:3 is simply false.

Because...

- ✓ Catholics have married priests
- ✓ Catholics honor marriage as a sacrament
- ✓ Celibacy is optional discipline, not doctrine
- ✓ Eastern Catholic priests are married
- ✓ Ordinariate priests are married
- ✓ 1 Timothy condemns Gnostics — not Catholics
- ✓ Jesus and Paul were unmarried
- ✓ The Catholic Church never forbade marriage

So next time someone says “Catholics forbid marriage,” just smile and say:

“Actually, the Catholic Church has married priests — and always has.” **(take it from internet)**

Did you know!

Somewhere in Italy, a young woman rushes on a date to a restaurant. In Poland, a little girl braids her favorite doll’s hair and sings a song to her.

In France, a man in an elegant suit chooses a necklace for his wife.

In Australia, children play on the carpet and wait for their mother to bake a cake.

In America, a woman cannot choose a name for her newborn son.

In a respectable age in Germany, a man walks in a park and listens to birds sing.

At the same time ...

Here. In Ukraine. War.

Here. In Ukraine. Genocide.

Elderly people are bullied here. Men are being tortured. Shoot in the back of the head. Women are raped in front of children. Children are raped. They kill.

Here. In Ukraine. In 2022, people are buried in mass graves.

Buried in the yards. Near the entrances. Or they just leave the bodies on the streets because there is no one to bury them.

Here. In Ukraine. Destroy the population of cities. Clean up. Equalize settlements with land. They leave fires behind.

At the same time ...

Somewhere. There. In the world. Someone makes the bed, kisses the child on the cheek and wishes good dreams.

Here. In Ukraine. We wish each other GOOD NIGHT.

Our children dream of GOOD NIGHTS.

...The world has derailed. **By Natalia Tchaikovsky**

The Story of Saint Francis Xavier and the Crab

In 1546, Saint Francis Xavier was traveling by sea to Malacca, (in modern-day Malaysia). What began as a calm voyage quickly turned into a nightmare. Dark clouds rolled in, the wind roared, and towering waves smashed against the ship. The sailors clung to anything they could hold, certain that the storm would swallow them whole.

As the waves raged, Francis Xavier, in an act of faith and prayer, took his crucifix and dipped it into the sea, asking God to use it as an instrument to calm the turbulent waters.

The Storm Ceases

Almost instantly, the wind began to soften. The towering waves sank back into the ocean as though soothed by an unseen hand. Within moments, the sea became calm—so calm that it looked like a mirror stretching to the horizon.

But in that moment of relief, Francis realized something painful: the crucifix had slipped from his hand and disappeared into the deep. The storm had ended, yet the saint felt a deep sadness for the cross he cherished.

The Miracle of the Crab

The next morning, after reaching land, Francis Xavier walked alone to the shore to pray. The sun was rising, shining gently across the water. As he knelt in silence, something small glimmered near the surface of the sea.

A crab slowly emerged from the water, its shell glistening under the morning light. And clutched firmly in one of its claws was the lost crucifix.

The little creature crawled straight toward the saint and stopped at his feet, as if presenting the precious cross with reverence.

A Blessing Remembered

Deeply moved, Francis Xavier took the cross and blessed the humble crab. According to legend, ever since that day, a species of crab in the region—*Charybdis feriata*—bears a natural marking on its shell that resembles a cross, a reminder of the miracle and the faith of the saint.

(take it from the internet)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

1. Q. Which is the most excellent of all vocal prayers?

A. The most excellent of all vocal prayers is that which Jesus Christ taught us, that is to say, the Our Father.

2. Q. Why is the Our Father the most excellent of all prayers?

A. The Our Father is the most excellent of all prayers because Jesus Christ Himself composed it and taught it to us; because it contains clearly and in a few words all we can hope for from God; and because it is the standard and model of all other prayers.

3 Q. Is the Our Father also the most efficacious of prayers?

A. Yes, it is also the most efficacious of prayers, because it is the most acceptable to God, since in it we pray in the very words His Divine Son has taught us.

4 Q. Why is the Our Father called the Lord's Prayer?

A. The Our Father is called the Lord's Prayer, precisely because Jesus Christ our Lord has taught it to us with His own lips.

5 Q. How many petitions are there in the Our Father?

A. In the Our Father there are seven petitions preceded by an introduction.

6 Q. Say the Our Father.

A. (1) Our Father who art in Heaven:

(2) Hallowed be Thy Name;

(3) Thy kingdom come;

(4) Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;

(5) Give us this day our daily bread;

(6) And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;

(7) And lead us not into temptation;

(8) But deliver us from evil. Amen.

7 Q. When invoking God in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, why do we call Him Our Father?

A. In the beginning of the Lord's Prayer we call God Our Father, to foster confidence in His infinite goodness by the remembrance that we are his children.

8 Q. How can we say that we are the children of God?

A. We are the children of God: first, because He has created us in His own image, and preserves and governs us by His providence; and secondly, because by an Act of special benevolence He has adopted us in Baptism as brothers of Jesus Christ and co-heirs with Him to eternal glory.

9 Q. Why do we call God Our Father and not my Father?

A. We call God Our Father and not my Father, because we are all His children, and hence we should look upon and love one another as brothers and pray for one another.

10 Q. God being in every place, why do we say: Who art in heaven?

A. God is in every place; but we say: Our Father who art in heaven, to raise our hearts to heaven, where God manifests His glory to His children.

The First Petition

11 Q. What do we ask in the First Petition when we say: Hallowed be Thy Name?

A. In the First Petition: Hallowed be Thy Name, we ask that God may be known, loved, honored and served by the whole world and by ourselves in particular.

12 Q. What do we intend when we ask that God may be known, loved, honored and served by the whole world?

A. We intend to beg that unbelievers may come to the knowledge of the Lord God, that heretics may recognize their errors, that those no longer in unity with the Catholic Church may return to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, that sinners may repent, and that the just may persevere in well-doing.

13 Q. Why do we first of all ask that the Name of God may be sanctified?

A. We first of all ask that the Name of God may be sanctified, because the glory of God should be nearer our hearts than all other goods and interests.

14 Q. How can we promote the glory of God?

A. We can promote the glory of God by prayer, by good example, and by directing to Him all our thoughts, affections and actions.

The Second Petition

15 Q. What do we mean by the Kingdom of God?

A. By the Kingdom of God we mean a threefold spiritual Kingdom; that is, the reign of God in us, or the reign of grace; the reign of God on earth, or the Holy Catholic Church; and the reign of God in heaven, or Paradise.

16 Q. In the words: Thy Kingdom come, what do we ask with regard to grace?

A. With regard to grace we beg that God may reign in us by His sanctifying grace, by which He deigns to dwell within us as a king in his palace; and that He may keep us ever united to Himself by the virtues of faith, hope and charity, through which He reigns over our intellect, our heart and our will.

17 Q. In the words: Thy Kingdom come, what do we ask regarding the Church?

A. Regarding the Church we ask that she may be spread and propagated ever more and more throughout the world for the salvation of mankind.

18 Q. In the words: Thy Kingdom come, what do we ask regarding Heaven? A. Regarding Heaven we beg to be one day be admitted into that Paradise for which we were created and where we shall be perfectly happy.

The Third Petition

19 Q. What do we ask in the Third Petition: Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven?

A. In the Third Petition: Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, we beg the grace to do the will of God in all things by obeying His Commandments as promptly as the Angels and Saints obey Him in Heaven; and we also beg the grace to correspond to divine inspirations and to live resigned to the will of God should He send us tribulations.

20 Q. Is it necessary to do the will of God?

A. It is as necessary to do the will of God as it is to work out our salvation because Jesus Christ has said that they alone who have done the will of His Father shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

21 Q. In what way can we know the will of God?

A. We can know the will of God especially by means of the Church and of the spiritual superiors appointed by God to guide us along the way of salvation; we may also learn His most holy will from the divine inspirations that come to us and from the very surroundings in which the Lord has placed us.

22 Q. Should we always recognize the will of God in adversity as well as in prosperity?

A. Both in prosperity and adversity we should always recognize the will of God, who directs or permits all things for our good.

The Fourth Petition

23 Q. What do we ask in the Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread?

A. In the Fourth Petition we beg of God all that is daily necessary for soul and body.

24 Q. What do we ask of God for our soul?

A. For our soul we ask of God the sustenance of our spiritual life, that is, we pray the Lord to give us His grace of which we stand in continual need.

25 Q. How is the life of the soul nourished?

A. The life of the soul is nourished principally by the food of the word of God and by the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

26 Q. What do we ask of God for our body?

A. For the body we ask all that is necessary for the sustainment of our temporal life.

27 Q. Why do we say: Give us this day our daily bread, rather than: Give us bread this day?

A. We say: Give us this day our daily bread, rather than: Give us bread this day, to exclude all desire of what is another's; and hence we beg the Lord to help us in acquiring just and lawful gains, so that we may procure our maintenance by our own toil And without theft or fraud.

28 Q. Why do we say: Give us bread, and not: Give me bread? A. We say: Give us, rather than, Give me, to remind us that as everything comes from God, so if He gives us His gifts in abundance, He does it in order that we may share what we do not need with the poor.

29 Q. Why do we add: Daily?

A. We add, Daily, because we should desire that which is necessary to life, and not an abundance of food and other goods of the earth.

30 Q. What more does Daily signify in the Fourth Petition?

A. The word Daily signifies that we should not be too solicitous regarding the future, but that we should simply ask what we need at present.

The Fifth Petition

31 Q. What do we ask in the Fifth Petition; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?

A. In the Fifth Petition: And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us, we ask God to pardon us our sins as we pardon those who offend us.

32 Q. Why are our sins called debts?

A. Our sins are called debts, because we must satisfy God's justice for them either in this life or in the next.

33 Q. Can those who do not forgive their neighbor hope that God will pardon them?

A. Those who do not forgive their neighbor have no reason to hope that God will pardon them; especially since they condemn themselves when they ask God to forgive them as they forgive their neighbor.

The Sixth Petition

34 Q. What do we ask in the Sixth Petition: And lead us not into temptation?

A. In the Sixth Petition: And lead us not into temptation, we ask God to deliver us from temptation either by not allowing us to be tempted, or by giving us grace not to be conquered.

35 Q. What are temptations?

A. Temptations are an incitement to sin that comes from the devil, or from the wicked, or from our own evil passions.

36 Q. Is it a sin to have temptations?

A. No, it is no sin to have temptations; but it is a sin to consent to them, or voluntarily to expose oneself to the danger of consenting to them.

37 Q. Why does God allow us to be tempted?

A. God allows us to be tempted so as to test our fidelity, increase our virtue, and augment our merits.

38 Q. What should we do to avoid temptations?

A. To avoid temptation we should fly dangerous occasions, guard our senses, receive the sacraments frequently, and have recourse to the practice of prayer...
