

## **Great Feast Day of Theophany, or Epiphany, celebrated throughout Orthodox world**



The Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, also known as the Epiphany, was celebrated by much of the Orthodox world on Monday, as the day commemorates the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River by John the Forerunner — seen as Christ’s manifestation to the world as the Son of God.

Epiphany is one of the Great Feasts in the Orthodox liturgical calendar, ranking third behind Holy Easter and the Pentecost.

In Greece, the Feast of the Theophany is commemorated with the Great Blessing of Waters, with the most prominent service annually held quayside in the port city of Piraeus, in the greater Athens area.

On Monday morning, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, officiated at the Great Blessing of Waters in Piraeus, in the presence of President of the Republic Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

Earlier, the Archbishop co-officiated at an archieratical Divine Liturgy at Piraeus' Cathedral of the Holy Trinity with the Metropolitan of Piraeus, His Eminence Seraphim. A liturgical procession then commenced towards the port side for the blessing ceremony, whereupon Ieronymos released the Cross into the waters. Members of a Hellenic Navy seal team then dived into the frigid waters to retrieve the Cross.

Hundreds of faithful along with office-holders and state services' representatives attended the ceremony.

In another ancient Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, His Divine Beatitude Theodoros II, on Monday officiated at a celebratory Divine Liturgy and a Great Blessing of the Waters ceremony at the Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria.

The Orthodoxy news agency was on hand today in the Egyptian metropolis for the Great Feast Day.

Representatives of the ethnic Greek community of Alexandria, the Cypriot brotherhood, Greek organizations and institutions were in attendance, along with numerous faithful.

In a subsequent message for the Great Feast Day, His Divine Beatitude, the Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria and All Africa, issued a message of peace and rapprochement for war-torn Libya, speaking from the Patriarchal bishopric in Cairo.

Theodoros also expressed hope that the Orthodox cathedrals in Tripoli and Benghazi will again reopen in the strife-plagued North African country, while telling correspondents of the Orthodoxy news agency that he prays for the Mediterranean to again become a sea of peace.

Halfway around the world, on a somber note, as dozens of wildfires continued to cause devastation in southeast Australia, Orthodox faithful on the island continent observed the Great Feast Day of Epiphany in churches around the country, with prayers offered for an end of the blazes.

At the Monastery of the Panagia Kamariani, in the Melbourne area, congregant Matthew Papadimitriou, who hails from Florida, retrieved the Cross when it was cast into the waters by the Archimandrite, receiving a gold Cross as a blessing.

Back in Greece, the Great Blessing of the Waters service in the northern city of

Kastoria was again held at the lake along whose banks the city is located, with several local youths diving into the frozen waters to retrieve the Cross.

The Metropolitan of Kastoria, His Eminence Seraphim, officiated at a celebratory Divine Liturgy at the overflowing, with worshippers, Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

Still in southeast Europe, the Patriarch of All Romania, His Beatitude Daniel, referred to the significance of the Great Feast Day of Theophany for Christians, speaking to Orthodox clerics on Sunday at the Patriarchal residence in Bucharest.

He said "... on this day, the priest enters the homes of the faithful to remind Christians of their own baptism... Now, as mature adults we realize the value of our baptism, through which we received an absolution of our sins, acceptance of the grace of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of the soul."