

08/01/2020

Homily of Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at the Feast of Theophany



Archieratical Divine Liturgy
Feast of the Theophany
of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ

Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Tarpon Springs, Florida
January 6, 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the centuries before Christ, God ruled His people Israel through prophets and priests and kings. Each one had his special role to play in leading the nation.

The prophets spoke on behalf of God: they taught the people the ways of the Lord and called them to repentance. The prophets spoke also on behalf of the people: they prayed to God for mercy and forgiveness when His children sinned.

The priests served the holy altar of God. They dedicated their lives to the glory of God. They ran the Temple and led the people in worship. They offered sacrifices and maintained the ways of holiness.

The kings were appointed to govern the people, to protect them from enemies and evildoers. They enforced the laws of God and served as judges and generals.

No man could appoint himself to be a prophet or priest or king. Only by the calling of God could someone serve in one of these roles. This calling was made public through a ritual of anointing. Holy oil was poured over a man's head, making his face to shine, as if with the radiance of divine glory.

Every true leader underwent an anointing. For this reason, the Old Testament speaks of God's chosen leader as a Messiah, which is Hebrew for "Anointed One." In Greek, the word is Christós. There were many "anointed ones" down through the ages, who led the people spiritually or liturgically or politically. But no one was ever anointed to serve as prophet AND priest AND king at one and the same time—not until the day that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan.

It was in His baptism that Jesus was revealed to the world as the one true Christ, the Anointed One above all others. The Son of God came to the world to be forever our prophet, priest, and king. It was not by the words of a mere mortal that Jesus was named as God's chosen one, but rather by the voice of the Father Himself from heaven. It was not by an earthly oil that Jesus was anointed and consecrated to serve, but rather by the Spirit of God Himself, coming down from heaven upon His head in the form of a dove. In ages past, many men had been anointed to lead, but only the Son of God was the true Christós. He was, and is, the great and eternal prophet and priest and king, for all the people of the world.

In Greek we call this Feast τα Θεοφάνεια—the revelation of God—or more precisely, the revelations of God. Not singular, but plural. Because in the Baptism of Christ, the world was shown many things that had never before been seen.

On this day, it was revealed that God is Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

On this day, it was revealed that God is one in essence and undivided, forever united in love and divine bliss.

On this day, it was revealed that Jesus is the Anointed One, promised from ancient times. He is truly the Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

On this day, it is revealed as well, that we are called to join the Lord in His work of salvation. And so, we also are anointed with the waters of His Baptism through the sprinkling of Agiasmo. In this way, we are united to the Chosen One, who appeared on this day to be for us, our glorious Prophet and Priest and King.

May we always live in the light of His glory!

Chronia Polla! May God bless and keep you forever!

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