

## **Archbishop Makarios of Australia, Celebrates Epiphany, Speaks of Human Humility**



SYDNEY – His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, celebrated the Feast of Theophany at the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Sydney on January 6. This feast commemorates the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. Christians believe the Holy Spirit appeared in the form a dove and the voice of God the Father was heard by all saying “this is my Son in whom I am well pleased.” Thus, the Church deems that The Holy Trinity presented itself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, from which the word ‘theophany’ is derived – Theo (God) Phany (to appear).

Celebrated globally by the Orthodox churches on this day, Archbishop Makarios reminded the congregation that in the early Church, the feast of Epiphany or Theophany was combined with Christmas and that it was later, in the third century, that the Church decided to celebrate Christmas on a separate day.

“Water is essential for life and for cleansing” he said, adding, “we need it both to live and to be clean.” So too the feast of Theophany reminds Christians of the gift of being alive and being clean and they believe people are given spiritual life and are cleansed through baptism both physically and spiritually as God enters them and is pleased with their cleanliness. Baptism is the personal Theophany of Christians.



Archbishop Makarios reminded the faithful that it is proper for people to maintain their connection to the source and their cleanliness, not only of the body, but of the soul. In this way, he explained, a person “walks the path to the Kingdom of Heaven, prepared for us by a God who loves us so much that he came to Earth in the form of a man to show us the way to His Kingdom.” Archbishop Makarios connected Theophany, the baptism of Christ, to peoples’ own baptism as Christians, and to the sacrament of confession for the maintenance of the life of their soul and its cleanliness.

His Eminence also referred to the tragedy of the Australian brushfires, which have taken so many lives, also burning over a million hectares of land and destroying over 500 million animals. He praised the firefighters and thanked them for their heroic effort to save lives and property.

He said that the mercy of God will cover the victims and their families.

Finally, he remarked that while mankind may think of itself as “all powerful,” having gone to the moon, next to the power of the forces of nature, mankind is humbled and meek.

He fervently asked everyone to pray to God, with passion, piety, humility, and love to “release the heavens,” a poetic reference to rain, saying that rain will be the quickest and most effective way to bring an end to the fires.

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