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His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily at the Divine Liturgy on Holy Theophany



Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

Tarpon Springs, Florida

January 6, 2021

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Today, the moment of the Feast is upon us, and the choir of Saints assembles with us, and Angels keep festival with mortals.

Today, the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovers over the waters.

Today, the Sun that never sets dawns forth, and the world is made radiant with the light of the Lord.

Today, the Moon with its radiant beams sheds light on the world.

Today, the stars formed of light make the inhabited world lovely with the

brightness of their splendor.

Today, the Uncreated by His own will accepts the laying on of hands by His own creature. [*]

With such prayers and more, we commemorate the Holy Epiphany of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. Yesterday, the Lord Jesus journeyed to the Jordan to be baptized by His cousin, John. Today, by His ineffable humility, the All-Holy Trinity is revealed.

The Father speaks from heaven: “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!”

The Holy Spirit alights upon His sacred and precious Head in the form of a dove.

And the Incarnate Son and Word of God bows beneath the hand of the Forerunner, to receive Baptism for our sake.

This is why we call this present feast Τά Ἁγία Φῶτα – the Holy Lights, because the same God Who said, “Let there be light,” is revealed in the Epiphany of the Lord Jesus in the River Jordan. We celebrate the Living Light that has come to illumine our souls.

The Holy Trinity, Who said, “Let us make the human being in our Own Image,” is made manifest as the Communion of Divine Persons, so that we should be encouraged to come together in the community of personhood. And what is this community?

In its most perfect form, it is the Church, the Ἐκκλησία, the beloved company of believers who gather together in order to be a community of love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness and hope. But our spiritual life extends far beyond the wall of our Temples!

My beloved Christians, just as water is most necessary to the life and health of every human being, so also are love and compassion necessary to the life of our human communities, whether they are religious or not. Our faith is not a private affair of only the Orthodox. We are called to be the light of the world![†]

Through our baptisms, we are called to recognize the value and preciousness of every human life, and to encounter them in communion, to the extent that human freedom allows. In the Church, this encounter manifests in the highest vocation of diakonia, of devotion and dedication as to the Lord himself. We express this solidarity by sharing in the Holy Eucharist and are thereby strengthened. God

nourishes us, so that we may nourish each other and the world around us.

My beloved friends, we are called to serve every person we meet; whether they are of the faith or not; whether they are of our opinions or not; whether they are of our politics or not; and whether they are of our liking or not.

God, as the Scripture says, has no prejudice toward any person.[‡] He makes the sun to shine on the good and the bad, and sends the showers of rain on the just and the unjust.[§]The waters of this world – oceans, lakes, rivers and streams, and yes, even the Spring Bayou – belong to every person, and are meant to be a blessing for life, health and for eternal life as well.

Therefore, we celebrate the revelation of the Holy Trinity on this most sacred day of Epiphany by blessing the waters. We ask for God's goodness and mercy to infuse the water, the most precious and most pervasive substance on our planet. We sprinkle ourselves and our families, our homes and our businesses, our automobiles and our pets, because we want to baptize every aspect of our lives and experience.

But if we are to manifest the presence of God in the world – to show forth His Holy Theophany – we need to go one step further. We must radiate from within the character and virtues of God Himself. Where any life is dry and desiccated from hatred and envy, let us water it with love.

Where the desert finds neither bloom nor flower, because of bitterness and grievance, let the "parched ground become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water"[**] with the healing balm of forgiveness.

Where the dry and arid ground of people's souls yearns for rainfall after years of emotional drought, let He "Who turns the rock into pools of water, and the precipice into fountains of water,"[††] open the heavens and unleash us to provide bountiful and gentle showers of compassion, mercy and empathy.

My beloved brothers and sisters,

Let us drink deeply of the water of life that is offered to us this day, quench our spiritual thirst, and renew our lives. And then we shall be able to fulfill the saying of the Lord:

If you, in the name of a disciple, satisfy the thirst of one of these little ones with just a cup of cold water, you will not lose your reward. [‡‡]

By the grace of the One Baptized in the Jordan, and through the intercessions of the one who baptized Him, may we always be worthy to receive the waters of life,

and bestow them on others. Amen.

[*] Prayer of the Great Blessing of the Waters of Saint Sophronios.

[†] Cf. Matthew 5:14.

[‡] Cf. Acts 10:34.

[§] Matthew 5:45.

[**] Isaiah 35:7.

[††] Psalm 113:8 (LXX).

[‡‡] Matthew 10:42.

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