

## SELECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

**PETER OF CANTERBURY** (d. 607), abbot. First abbot of St. Augustine's (then called SS. Peter and Paul), Peter was probably the monk of that name who was sent by \*Augustine to give news of the first Anglo-Saxon conversions to \*Gregory the Great and who brought back to England Gregory's replies to Augustine's questions. Peter was sent later on a mission to Gaul, but was drowned in the English Channel in the bay of Ambletuse (Amfleet). The local inhabitants, according to Bede, buried him in an 'unworthy place' but, as the result of a prodigy of mysterious light appearing over his grave at night, translated his relics to a church in Boulogne with suitable honour. At St. Augustine's, Canterbury, his feast was kept on 30 December; other authorities give 6 January.

Bede, *H.E.*, I. 27, 33; *AA.SS. Ian. I* (1643), 334.

**SIGEBERT** (I) (d. 635), king of East Anglia and martyr. Virtually all we know of him comes from \*Bede. During the reign of his predecessor Redwald (who had attempted to combine the worship of Christ with that of the Germanic gods in the same church), Sigebert went into exile in Frankia and became a Christian. He returned as king in 630, a very learned man (*doctissimus*), and with the help of Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, introduced \*Felix as bishop of East Anglia, based at Dunwich (or possibly Felixstowe) and enabled with royal endowment \*Fursey to establish his monastery at Burgh Castle. Felix under royal patronage also set up schools in East Anglia.

Sigebert did not reign for long: he resigned in favour of Ecgric and became a monk, possibly at Burgh Castle. Meanwhile Penda, king of Mercia, the scourge of other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, made war on East Anglia. Sigebert's countrymen, fearful of the morale of the troops in battle, took him against his will out of his monastery and brought him to the army, hoping that the presence of one who had been a brave and famous general would allay their fears. He, however, refused to carry a weapon but only a staff. He was killed with Ecgric in the total defeat which followed. Sigebert, like some other Anglo-Saxon kings who died in battle, was venerated as a martyr. East Anglian liturgical books were destroyed in the Danish invasions and his feast has been variously assigned to 16 January and 27 September.

**FURSEY** (Fursa) (d. 650), Irish abbot or bishop. He became a monk in Ireland but left it as a 'pilgrim for Christ', coming to East Anglia c.630. King \*Sigebert received him and his companions, especially \*Poillan, kindly and gave them the old fortress of Cnobheresburg (Burgh Castle, Suffolk) with adjacent lands for a monastery. On the death of Sigebert in battle against Penda, king of Mercia, Fursey left for France. Again he was helped by a ruler, Erchinoald, mayor of Neustria, who gave him land for another monastery, which he built at Lagny-sur-Marne. He died at Mezerolles (Somme); his body was buried at Péronne (Picardy), afterwards called *Perrona Scottorum*, in another Irish monastery.

In 654 his relics were translated to a shrine 'in the shape of a little house', supposedly made by \*Eloi. Another translation took place in 1056. Most of the relics remained until the French Revolution; a head reliquary survived even the Prussian bombardment of 1870. French, Irish, and English calendars (especially Canterbury, which claimed head-relics) attest his cult.

This was assisted by Bede's account of his vision of the after-life, one of the earliest of its kind. During a state of trance he saw visions of heaven and hell, angels and devils; on recovering he described his experiences and warned against future and detailed punishments for sins. Feast: 16 January.

*AA.SS. Ian. II* (1643), 35-55; *Bede, II.E.*, iii 19; *Vita Prima S. Fursei* in *M.G.H., Scriptores rerum merov.*, iv. 423-49; W. Stokes, 'Betha Fursa', *Revue Celtique*, xxv (1904), 385-404; J. Hennig, 'The Irish Background of St. Fursey', *I.E.R.* (1952), 18-28.

**PEGA** (d. c.719), virgin, sister of \*Guthlac. She lived as an anchoress at Peakirk (i.e. 'Pega's church') in Northamptonshire, not far from Guthlac's hermitage at Crowland. When he realized that his end was near (714), he invited her to his funeral. For this she sailed down the Welland, curing a blind man from Wisbech on the way. She inherited Guthlac's psalter and scourge, both of which, it was claimed, she later gave to Crowland. She went on pilgrimage to Rome and died there c.719. Ordericus Vitalis claimed that her relics survived in an unnamed Roman church in his day, and that miracles took place there. Feast: 8 January.



Antiochian Orthodox

St Fursey's Antiochian Orthodox

Christian Parish Church Stalham

Archdiocese Of the British Isles And Ireland Parish Priest Fr Stephen Weston

Archbishop: His Eminence

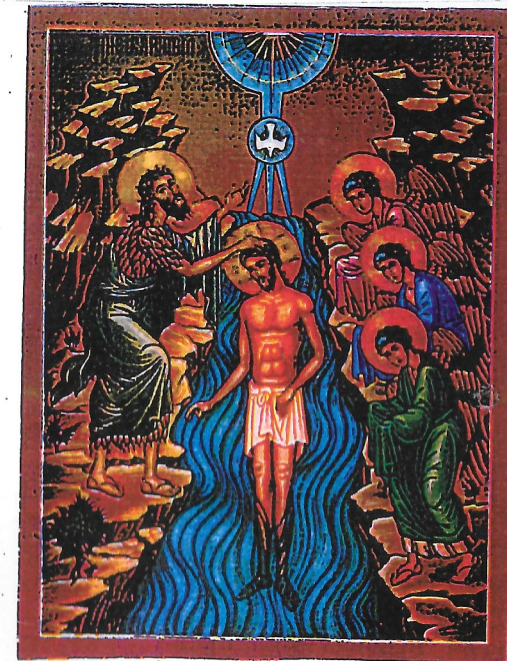
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Metropolitan Silouan Oner

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## COMMUNITY PROGRAMME & NEWSLETTER

January 2024



*The Epiphany, or the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan (January 6th)*

*Troparion*

WHEN thou wast baptized in Jordan, O Lord, then was made manifest the worship of the Trinity for the Voice of the Father bare witness to thee, naming thee his beloved Son; and the Spirit in form of a dove made good the certainty of his word. O Christ our God, who wast manifested and hast enlightened the world, glory be to thee.

SERVICES IN JANUARY 2024

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Fri January 5 <sup>th</sup>   | <b>Royal Hours for the Theophany</b><br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Hour 9am (Parish Church)<br>6 <sup>th</sup> Hour 12 Noon (St Fursey's Chapel)<br><b>Vespers 4:00pm.</b> |
| Sat January 6 <sup>th</sup>   | <b>Vespers 4:00pm</b><br><b>For Baptism of Our Lord</b>   |
| Sun January 7 <sup>th</sup>   | <b>The Theophany of Our Lord</b><br>Great Blessing of the Waters<br><b>Liturgy of St John Chrysostom 9:30am</b><br>Blessing of Stalham Staithe Waters 12 Noon.  |
| Sat January 13 <sup>th</sup>  | <b>Vespers 4:00pm.</b><br>(St Hilary of Poitiers 367).  |
| Sun January 14 <sup>th</sup>  | <b>Leave Taking of the Theophany</b><br><b>Divine Liturgy 9:30am</b><br>(Singing practice with Fr Paulinus).  |
| Mon January 15 <sup>th</sup>  | <b>PATRONAL FESTIVAL</b><br>Vespers for St Fursey<br>4:00pm.<br>(St Fursey's Chapel).   |
| Tues January 16 <sup>th</sup> | <b>Divine Liturgy for St Fursey 9:00am.</b>   |
| Sat January 20 <sup>th</sup>  | Vespers 4:00pm  |
| Sun January 21 <sup>st</sup>  | <b>Divine Liturgy 9:30am.</b><br>(St Maximus the Confessor 662).  |
| Sat January 27 <sup>th</sup>  | Vespers 4:00pm  |
| Sun January 28 <sup>th</sup>  | <b>Divine Liturgy 9:30am.</b><br>(St Isaac the Syrian 7 <sup>th</sup> )   |

BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS  
COMMEMORATED IN  
JANUARY.

- 01 Elvan and Mydwyn, Missionaries
- 03 Fugatius and Damian, Missionaries
- 06 Peter, Abbot of Canterbury
- 07 Brannoc of Braunton, Monk
- 08 Athelhelm, Archbishop of Canterbury  
Ethelbert, Bishop in Ireland\*  
Pega, Anchoress  
Wulsin, Bishop of Sherborne
- 09 Adrian, Abbot of Canterbury  
Berhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury
- 10 Sethrid, Abbess in France
- 12 Benedict, Abbot of Wearmouth
- 13 Kentigern (Mungo), Apostle of North-West England
- 15 Ceolfwulf, King of Northumbria, Monk
- 16 Fursey of East Anglia, Missionary
- 17 Mildgyth, Virgin
- 18 Wilfrid, Missionary and Martyr in Sweden\*
- 22 Berhtwald, Bishop of Ramsbury
- 25 Sigebert, King of East Anglia, Martyr  
Thordgyth of Barking, Nun
- 28 John the Wise of Malmesbury
- 30 Bathild of Chelles, Queen\*
- 31 Adamnan of Coldingham, Monk  
Wilgils, Hermit

TROPARION OF ST. FURSEY.

Establishing thy monastery in a Roman fortress  
thou didst teach men that the Orthodox Faith is  
a true bastion against the onslaughts of every evil  
force O Father Fursey.

Where fore pray to God for us that we may all be  
bastions of the Faith standing firm against the rising  
tide of falsehood that our souls may be saved.

KONTAKION OF ST. FURSEY.

Thou didst need the walls of stone to defend the Faith  
against its pagan enemies, O Father Fursey, but pray  
for us that we may have a spiritual wall around us to  
defend the Faith against its enemies. Following thee  
and praising thy eternal memory we stand firm against  
every error ever singing; Rejoice beloved of God,  
our Father Fursey.



## Daily Services in St Fursey's Chapel (Neville Road) Sutton

In addition to the above services there is also the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hour Service 9am on Tuesday followed by Coffee & refreshments and discussion. Also 3<sup>rd</sup> Hour Service 9am and reading from the Fathers.' Also, at St Fursey's Chapel in Sutton 3<sup>rd</sup> Hour 9am reading from Fathers on Monday & Friday and Vespers 4pm each day.

The hallmark of being human beings is that we worship our Creator: The Holy Trinity. We are not being truly human if we do not worship God. Even the animals worship their Creator in their own way.

### Community News & Notices

#### THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

It is the custom in the Orthodox Church for the faithful to have their homes blessed with Holy Water which is blessed at the Theophany Liturgy. Please let me know if you would like your home blessed. (Father Stephen 01692 581849).

#### THIS NEWSLETTER

This Newsletter has a circulation of 100, at least. We send 65 copies in the post and distribute 35 locally. Printing the newsletter and postage is a costly item each month. Many send donations and stamps to help cover the costs. This is much appreciated. The Newsletter is available on our website <http://saintfursey.uk/> and on ORTHODOXY STALHAM YOUTUBE CHANNEL. But it is nice to get something in the post! If I do not hear from you about this, I will stop sending it as funds are a bit tight.

#### THE PATRONAL FESTIVAL 16 JANUARY 2024

We commemorate the repose of St Fursey in Perronne in France in 650, and ministered in Norfolk from Burgh Castle circa 630 – 645 before going to France. We are able to have his Liturgy on Tuesday January 16<sup>th</sup> 9:00am, followed by light refreshments.

#### BIBLE STUDY

We have a short break over the Christmas period and New Year and resume in February.

#### METROPOLITAN SILOUAN'S VISIT

Metropolitan Silouan comes to St Fursey's on Saturday January 27<sup>th</sup> for Vespers and a Trustees meeting afterwards and he will preside at the Liturgy on the following Sunday.

#### OUR SINGING AT ST FURSEY'S

Our singing at the various services at St Fursey's tends to follow the Slavic tradition of Orthodox chanting in a very simple way. Fr Paulinus is coming to the Liturgy on January 14<sup>th</sup> to help us improve. We are very thankful to Isaac for carrying most of the responsibility of Reader.

Every Blessing to our Readers

Father Stephen

PS: Please Note my new Telephone No: 01692 581849

# Epiphany

The sixth of January is the feast of the **Epiphany**. Originally it was the one Christian feast of the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. It included the celebration of Christ’s birth, the adoration of the Wisemen, and all of the childhood events of Christ such as his circumcision and presentation to the temple as well as his baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast, like Easter and Pentecost, was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights.

**Epiphany** means **shining forth** or **manifestation**. The feast is often called, as it is in the Orthodox service books, **Theophany**, which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present-day celebration is on the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

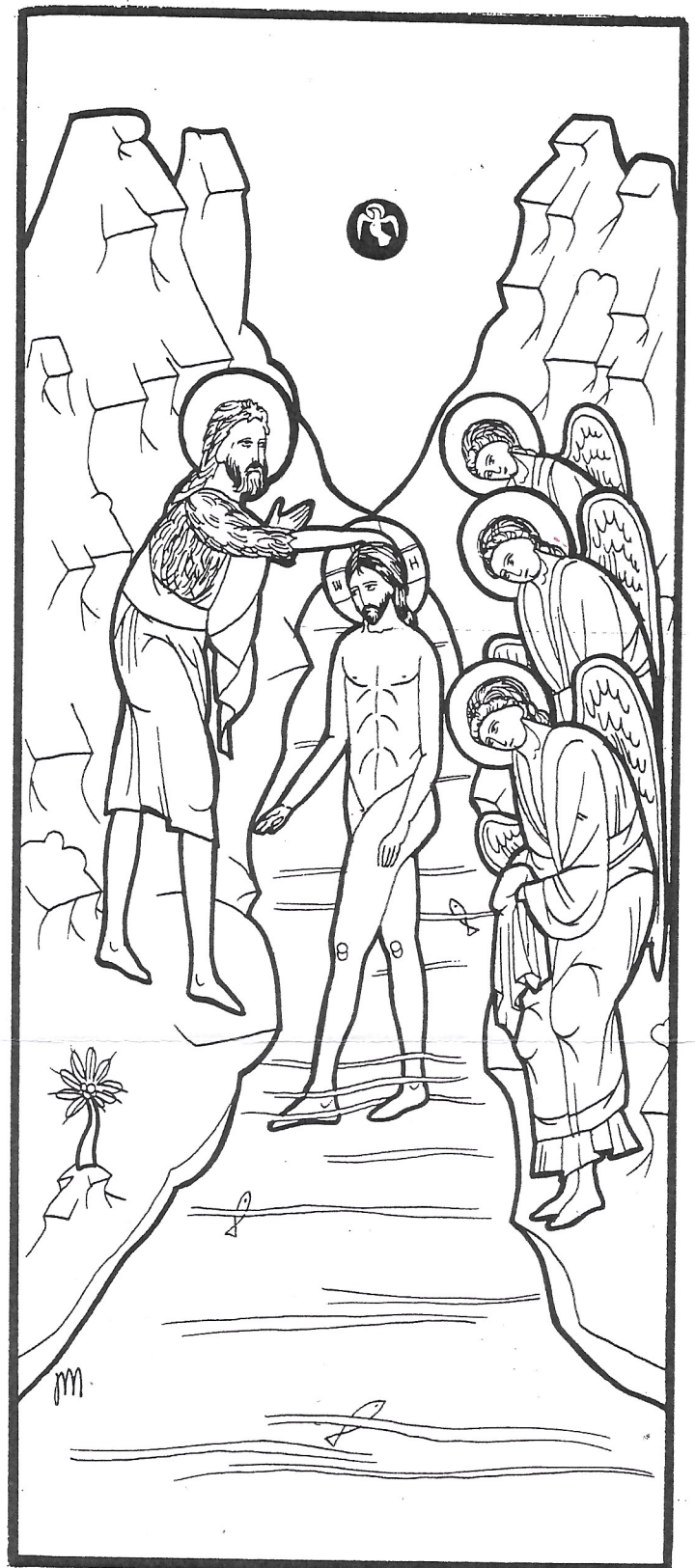
Thus, in the baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus identifies himself with sinners as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), the “Beloved” of the Father whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins. (Luke 3:21, Mark 1:35). And he is revealed as well as One of the Divine Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and by the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast:

**When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee. (Troparion)**

**Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, and Thy Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise Thee: Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion)**

The services of Epiphany are set up exactly as those of Christmas, although historically it was most certainly Christmas which was made to imitate Epiphany since it was established later. Once again the Royal Hours and the Liturgy of Saint Basil are celebrated together with Vespers on the eve of the feast; and the Vigil is made up of Great Compline and Matins.

The prophecies of Epiphany repeat the God is with Us from Isaiah and stress the foretelling of the Messiah as well as the coming of his forerunner, John the Baptist:



**The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 3:4-6)**

Once more special psalms are sung to begin the Divine Liturgy of the feast, and the baptismal line of Galatians 3:27 replaces the song of the Thrice-Holy. The gospel readings of all the Epiphany services tell of the Lord’s baptism by John in the Jordan River. The

epistle reading of the Divine Liturgy tells of the consequences of the Lord's appearing which is the divine epiphany.

**For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great**

**God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14)**

The main feature of the feast of the Epiphany is the **Great Blessing of Water**. It is prescribed to follow both the Divine Liturgy of the eve of the feast and the Divine Liturgy of the day itself. Usually it is done just once in parish churches at the time when most people can be present. It begins with the singing of special hymns and the censing of the water which has been placed in the center of the church building. Surrounded by candles and flowers, this water stands for the beautiful world of God's original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes this service of blessing is done out of doors at a place where the water is flowing naturally.

**The voice of the Lord cries over the waters, saying: Come all ye, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, even Christ who is made manifest.**

**Today the nature of water is sanctified. Jordan is divided in two, and turns back the stream of its waters, beholding the Master being baptized.**

**As a man Thou didst come to that river, O Christ our King, and dost hasten O Good One, to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner (John), because of our sins, O Lover of Man. (Hymns of the Great Blessing of Waters)**

Following are three readings from the Prophecy of Isaiah concerning the messianic age:

**Let the thirsty wilderness be glad, let the desert rejoice, let it blossom as a rose, let it blossom abundantly, let everything rejoice . . . (Isaiah 35:1-10)**

**Go to that water, O you who thirst, and as many as have no money, let them eat and drink without price, both wine and fat . . . (Isaiah 55:1-13)**

**With joy draw the water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall you say: Confess ye unto the Lord and call upon his Name; declare his glorious deeds . . . his Name is exalted . . . Hymn the Name of the Lord . . . Rejoice and exult . . . (Isaiah 12:3-6)**

After the epistle (I Corinthians 1:10-14) and the gospel reading (Mark 1:9-11) the special great litany is chanted invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon those who will partake of it: It ends with the great prayer of the cosmic glorification

of God in which Christ is called upon to sanctify the water, and all men and all creation, by the manifestation of his saving and sanctifying divine presence by the indwelling of the Holy and Good and Life-creating Spirit.

As the troparion of the feast is sung, the celebrant immerses the Cross into the water three times and then proceeds to sprinkle the water in the four directions of the world. He then blesses the people and their homes with the sanctified water which stands for the salvation of all men and all creation which Christ has effected by his "epiphany" in the flesh for the life of the world.

Sometimes people think that the blessing of water and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it over everyone and everything is a "paganism" which has falsely entered the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God in the Old Testament, and that in the Christian Church it has a very special and important significance.

It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has been immersed in the streams of the Jordan, all matter is sanctified and made pure in him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the wickedness of men. In the Lord's epiphany all creation becomes good again, indeed "very good," the way that God himself made it and proclaimed it to be in the beginning when "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2) and when the "Breath of Life" was breathing in man and in everything that God made. (Genesis 1:30; 2:7)

The world and everything in it is indeed "very good" (Genesis 1:31) and when it becomes polluted, corrupted and dead, God saves it once more by effecting the "new creation" in Christ, his divine Son and our Lord by the grace of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 6:15) This is what is celebrated on Epiphany, particularly in the **Great Blessing of Water**. The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world—through its "prime element" of water—in the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit. It tells us that man and the world were indeed created and saved in order to be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19), the "fullness of him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22) It tells us that Christ, in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," is and shall be truly "all, and in all." (Colossians 2:9, 3:11) It tells us as well that the "new heavens and the new earth" which God has promised through his prophets and apostles (Isaiah 66:22; II Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1) are truly "with us" already now in the mystery of Christ and his Church.

Thus, the sanctification and sprinkling of the Epiphany water is no pagan ritual. It is the expression of the most central fact of the Christian vision of man, his life and his world. It is the liturgical testimony that the vocation and destiny of creation is to be "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

# THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

## Vespers

On Lord, I have cried, *eight stichera are sung:*

TONE TWO

(by John the Monk)

The Forerunner beheld our Enlightenment, who has brought light to all mankind, draw near for baptism: and he rejoiced in soul while his hand trembled. And he shewed Him to the people, saying: 'Behold, the Redeemer of Israel, who sets us free from corruption.' O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

The hosts of angels were filled with fear, as they saw our Deliverer baptized by a servant and receiving witness through the coming of the Spirit. And the Father's voice was heard from on high: 'He upon whom the Forerunner lays his hand, the same is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'<sup>1</sup> O Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

The streams of the Jordan received Thee who art the fountain, and the Comforter descended in the form of a dove. He who bowed the heavens,<sup>2</sup> bowed His head, and the clay cried aloud to Him that formed him: 'Why dost Thou command of me what lies beyond my power? For I have need to be baptized of Thee.'<sup>3</sup> O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

Wishing to save man gone astray, Thou hast not disdained to clothe Thyself in the form of a servant. For it befitted Thee, as Master and God, to take upon Thyself our nature for our sakes. For Thou, O Deliverer, hast been baptized in the flesh, making us worthy of forgiveness. Therefore we cry unto Thee: O Christ our God and Benefactor, glory to Thee (*twice*).

Glory be to the Father . . . Both now . . .

(by Byzas)

Thou hast bowed Thine head before the Forerunner and hast crushed the heads of the dragons.<sup>1</sup> Thou hast descended into the waters and hast given light to all things, that they may glorify Thee, O Saviour, the Enlightenment of our souls.

From a sermon by Saint Proclus of Constantinople, bishop.

(Sermo 7 in sancta Theophania, 1-3: PG 65, 758-759)

### THE WATERS ARE MADE HOLY

Christ appeared in the world; and, bringing beauty out of disarray, gave it luster and joy. He bore the world's sin and crushed the world's enemy. He sanctified the fountains of waters and enlightened the minds of men. Into the fabric of miracles he interwove ever greater miracles.

For on this day land and sea share between them the grace of the Savior, and the whole world is filled with joy. Today's feast of the Epiphany manifests even more wonders than the feast of Christmas.

On the feast of the Savior's birth, the earth rejoiced because it bore the Lord in a manger; but on today's feast of the Epiphany it is the sea that is glad and leaps for joy; the sea is glad because it receives the blessing of holiness in the river Jordan.

At Christmas we saw a weak baby, giving proof of our weakness. In today's feast, we see a perfect man, hinting at the perfect Son who proceeds from the all-perfect Father. At Christmas the King puts on the royal robe of his body; at Epiphany the very source enfolds and, as it were, clothes the river.

Come then and see new and astounding miracles: the Sun of righteousness washing in the Jordan, fire immersed in water, God sanctified by the ministry of man.

Today every creature shouts in resounding song: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* Blessed is he who comes in every age, for this is not his first coming.

And who is he? Tell us more clearly, I beg you, blessed David: *The Lord is God and has shone upon us.* David is not alone in prophesying this; the apostle Paul adds his own witness, saying: *The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all men, and instructing us.* Not for some men, but for all. To Jews and Greeks alike God bestows salvation through baptism, offering baptism as a common grace for all.

Come, consider this new and wonderful deluge, greater and more important than the flood of Noah's day. Then the water of the flood destroyed the human race, but now the water of baptism has recalled the dead to life by the power of the one who was baptized. In the days of the flood the dove with an olive branch in its beak foreshadowed the fragrance of the good odor of Christ the Lord; now the Holy Spirit, coming in the likeness of a dove, reveals the Lord of mercy.