

PSALM 98

A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord prevailed; the people were enraged!

It is He who is seated upon the cherubim. So let the earth be agitated.

2 The Lord is great in Sion. And He is exalted above all the people.

3 Let them praise Thy great name, for it is awesome and holy;

4 And the value of a king is the love of justice.

Thou hast provided guidance; Thou hast created judgment
and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at the footstool of His feet; for He is holy.

**6 Moses and Aaron in their priesthood, and Samuel amongst those
who invoked His Name, have called upon the Lord, and He heard them.**

7 From the pillar of cloud He spoke unto them, for they kept His
testimony, and the commandments that He had given them.

8 O Lord our God, Thou hast heard them;

**Thou wast favorably inclined to them, O God,
yet Thou judged harshly their pursuits.**

9 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy mountain;
for the Lord our God is holy.

This psalm is of the thirteenth kathisma. The "footstool" of God has been interpreted by our hymnographers as being the Holy Cross, therefore the prokeimenon of that Great Feast consists of verses 5 & 1. Also during that liturgy verses 1, 2, and 3 are the refrains to the third antiphon and verse 5 also serves as the introit.

Verse 5 is also sung at the end of the Megalynaria [the Magnifications offered to the Theotokos] of each Sunday's Orthros.

Verse 6 (and verse 12 of Psalm 96) is the prokeimenon of services commemorating Prophets.

Verse 8 is considered as referring to the Pharisees who ignored the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ἁγία Σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

January 3, 2010

Sunday Before Theophany

The tone for this day is Plagal 1

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 8

John 20:11-18

At that time, Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"--and that he had said these things to her.

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.

Prokeimenon: Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance
To You, O Lord, I have cried, O my God. Psalm 11:7 + 1

The Epistle is from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8

TIMOTHY, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The Gospel Lesson is from Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Kontakion Tone 4

Standing in the running waters of the Jordan,
The Lord cried out to John: "Be not afraid to baptize Me,
for I have come to save Adam, the first created man."

On The Sunday Before Theophany

The Forerunner is breathless. He asks, "Why do you come to me when I have need to be baptized by you?" Our Savior said Baptize me!"

Why did He do it? He did it to identify with sinners. He did it to open for us the gates of Paradise. He did it to institute Christian baptism, calling down upon Himself the Holy Spirit, and sanctifying the waters. Never would the world be the same. The waters of the Jordan have been sanctified. The fount of Christian baptism has been established. A portal to the Kingdom of God has been established on the earth.

Now listen to the testimony of Holy Scripture. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all the nations. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (St. Mark 16: 16). "Unless you are born of water and the spirit you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (St. John 3:3, 5). "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). How is this baptismal miracle possible? By the miracle of our Savior's baptism in the Jordan, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ in the waters.

How easy it is for each of us to forget what has happened to us! When we witness the godparents renouncing Satan, denying him any ground whatsoever, and even spitting in his face as an act of defiance and war we remember what life is about. There is no playing with evil. The demons despise us and want us dead. The passions they inflame are the instruments of their murderous plots. We have pledged ourselves to fight them, to reject them, to crush them under our feet.

Treasure your baptism dear ones. It is everything you need. "Everyone baptized in the Orthodox manner has received mystically the fullness of grace; but he becomes conscious of this grace only to the extent that he actively observes the commandments" When we are baptized the image of God is restored to its original condition. In the catharsis of Holy Baptism the evil one is cast out and grace comes within. Let Theophany remind us of this.

St. Andrew Orthodox Church / Father Josiah Trenham