

§ GREAT BLESSING OF THE WATERS

Tone 8

The voice of the Lord is over the waters. It cries aloud and says, "All you people, at the Epiphany of Christ come and receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding and the Spirit of the fear of God." X3

Today the nature of the water is sanctified and the Jordan is divided into two. It holds back the stream of its own water, because it sees the Master cleanse himself. X2

O Christ the King, you have come to the river as a man. O Lover of the human race, you hurry in your goodness to receive a servant's baptism at the hands of the Forerunner for the sake of our sins. X2

Glory: Both now:

O Lord, at the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord," you took the form of a servant, appeared and asked for baptism, yet did not know sin. The waters saw you and were afraid. The Forerunner was seized with trembling, cried and said, "How can the Lamp illuminate the light? How can the servant place his hand on the Master? O Saviour, you take away the sin of the world, so sanctify both me and the waters."

Prophecies

1: From the Prophecy of Isaiah (35:1-10) *Poetic*

Thus says the Lord: Be glad, O thirsty desert! Let the wilderness rejoice and flower like the lily. ² And the desert places of Jordan will blossom and rejoice. The glory of Lebanon has been given to it, together with the honour of Carmel. My people will see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of God. ³ Be strong, O weak hands and palsied knees. ⁴ Comfort one another, O fainthearted. Be strong, do not fear; see, our God renders judgment, and he will administer it; he will come and save us. ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will hear. ⁶ Then the lame man will leap like a hart, and the tongue of the stammerers will speak plainly, for water has burst out in the desert, and a channel of water in a thirsty land. ⁷ And the dry land will become pools, and a fountain of water will be poured into the thirsty land; there shall there be a joy of birds, ready habitations and marshes. ⁸ There will be a pure way in it, and it will be called a holy way. And there will not pass through it any unclean person, neither will there be an unclean way in it, but the scattered will walk along it, and they will not go astray. ⁹ And there will be no lion there, neither will any wild animal go along it, nor even be found there, but the redeemed and those assembled for the Lord will walk along it. ¹⁰ They will return, come to Zion with joy, and everlasting joy will be over their head, for on their head will be praise and exultation. Joy will take possession of them; sorrow, pain and groaning have fled away.

2: From the Prophecy of Isaiah (55:1-13) *Poetic*

Thus says the Lord: You who thirst, go to the water; all who have no money, go and buy. Eat and drink wine and fat without money or price. ² Why do you value at the price of money and give your labour for what will not satisfy? Listen to me and you will eat what is good and your soul will feast on good things. ³ Pay attention with your ears and follow my ways. Listen to me and your soul will live in prosperity. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the sure mercies of David. ⁴ See, I have made him a testimony among the nations, a prince and commander to the nations. ⁵ See, nations which do not know you will call to you, and peoples who are not acquainted with you, will flee to you for refuge, for the sake of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. ⁶ Seek the Lord, and when you find him, call on him. When he approaches you, ⁷ let the ungodly leave his ways and the lawless man his counsels. Let him return to the Lord, and he will find mercy, for he will abundantly pardon your sins. ⁸ For my counsels are not like your counsels, nor are my ways like your ways, says the Lord. ⁹ But as the heaven is distant from the earth, so is my way

distant from your ways, and your thoughts from my thoughts. ¹⁰ For as rain comes down from heaven, or snow, will not return until it has saturated the earth, and it will yield, and bud, and give seed to the sower, and bread for food, ¹¹ so my word will be. Whatever proceeds from my mouth, it will by no means turn back, until all the things which I determined have been accomplished. I will make your ways prosperous, and will effect my commands. ¹² For you will go out with joy, and will be taught with gladness, for the mountains and the hills will rejoice to welcome you with joy, and all the trees of the field will applaud with their branches. ¹³ And instead of the bramble will come up the cypress, and instead of the nettle will come up the myrtle. The Lord will be for a name, and for an everlasting sign, and will not fail.

3: From the Prophecy of Isaiah (12:3-6)

Thus says the Lord: You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation ⁴ You will say on that day: Praise the Lord and acclaim his name. Announce his glories among the nations; *and* remember that his name is exalted. ⁵ Praise the name of the Lord, for he has accomplished great *wonders*; announce them to the whole earth. ⁶ Let the inhabitants of Zion rejoice and be glad, for the Holy One of Israel is exalted in her midst.

Prokeimenon Tone 3

R: The Lord is my light and my Saviour.

S: The Lord is the defender of my life.

Apostolos

From the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (10:1-4)

Brothers, I want you to know that our fathers were all under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same supernatural food, ⁴ and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them and the Rock was Christ.

Alleluia Ps 29 Tone 4

S1: The voice of the Lord *is* over the waters.

S2: The God of glory has thundered over the waters.

Gospel

From the Holy Gospel according to Mark (1: 9-11)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; ¹¹ and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Irinika

In peace, let us pray to the Lord

For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the Holy Churches of God and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

For all faithful and Orthodox Christians, let us pray to the Lord.

For our Father and Archbishop N, for the honourable order of presbyters, for the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

For the faithful nations, for every power and authority in them, let us pray to the Lord

For this city (country place), for every city, monastery, island and village, and for the faithful who live in them, let us pray to the Lord. For favourable weather, an abundance of the earth's fruits and temperate seasons, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who travel by land, air or water, for the sick, the suffering, for those in captivity, and for their safety and salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

That this water may be sanctified by the power, action and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That the purifying operation of the Holy Trinity may descend on this water, let us pray to the Lord.

That it may be given the grace of redemption and the blessing of the Jordan, let us pray to the Lord.

That we may be enlightened by the light of knowledge and devotion through the descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That this water may become a gift of sanctification, a rescue from sin, a healing of soul and body, and for every beneficial purpose, let us pray to the Lord.

That this water may spring up to eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

That it may become a cleansing of souls and bodies for all those who draw in faith and drink it, let us pray to the Lord.

That we may become worthy to be filled with holiness through the use of this water by the invisible revelation of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That it may serve for banishing every plot of the enemy, both visible and invisible, let us pray to the Lord.

That the Lord our God will listen to the voice of us sinners as we plead and have mercy on us, let us pray to the Lord.

For our rescue from every affliction, fury, danger and anguish, let us pray to the Lord.

O God, help us, save us, have mercy on us and keep us by your grace.

As we commemorate our all-holy, pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us entrust ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

Prayer of Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem C7

O Lord Jesus Christ, uniquely-fathered Son, you are in the bosom of the Father. *You are* true God, Source of life and immortality, Light from Light, and came into the world to enlighten it. Flood our mind with light by your Holy Spirit and receive us as we bring you praise and gratitude for your wonderful and mighty works from every age, and for your saving dispensation in these last times. Through it you clothe yourself in our weak and poor nature. O King of all, you descended to the level of our slavery and determined also to be baptised in the Jordan at the hand of a servant. O sinless *Lord*, when you had sanctified the nature of the water in this way, you could establish a way for our rebirth through water and Spirit, and re-establish us in our original freedom. O Master, Lover of the human race, as we celebrate the memory of this divine Mystery, we implore you, "Sprinkle cleansing water on us, your unworthy servants, in accordance with your divine promise, the gift of your compassion, so that the plea of us sinners over this water may become acceptable by your goodness. Through it may your blessing be granted us and all your faithful people, to the glory of your holy and venerable Name. For all glory, honour and worship belong to you, together with your Father who is without beginning, and with your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

[O Trinity beyond all being, beyond all goodness, beyond all divinity, all-powerful, all-watchful, invisible, incomprehensible, Creator of the spiritual beings and rational natures, innate goodness, unapproachable Light who enlightens everyone coming into the world, shine also on me your unworthy servant. Enlighten the eyes of my mind so that I can sing the praises of your limitless generosity and power. Let my pleading for the people who are present be acceptable, so that my offences may not prevent the Holy Spirit from being here. Permit me now without condemnation to cry to you and say, "O Master, Lover of the human race, beyond all goodness, almighty, eternal King, we glorify you, the Creator and Fashioner of the inhabited earth. We glorify you, O uniquely-fathered Son of God, without father from your Mother, without mother from your Father. For in the preceding feast we saw you as a baby, but in the present one we see you as full and perfect man, our God revealed as perfect God from perfect God. For today the event of the Feast is here for us. The choir of saints assembles here with us and the angels observe the festival together with men.]

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rested on the waters.

Today the Sun which never sets has dawned 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 splendour.

Today the clouds drop down from heaven with the shower of justice for the human race.

Today the Uncreated *Lord* by his own will accepts being touched by the hands of his own creature.

Today the Prophet and Forerunner approaches, but stands aside with fear when he sees God's condescension towards us.

Today the streams of Jordan are changed into healing by the presence of the Lord.

Today all creation is watered by mystical streams.

Today the failings of the human race are being washed away by the waters of the Jordan.

Today Paradise is opened for the human race and the Sun of justice shines over us.

Today the water, which was once bitter for the people of Moses, is changed to sweetness by the presence of the Lord.

Today we have been rescued from the ancient grief and saved as the new Israel.

Today we have been redeemed from darkness and are filled with radiance by the light of the knowledge of God.

Today the gloomy fog of the world is cleansed by the revelation of our God.

Today all creation shines with light from above.

Today error has been destroyed and the coming of the Master makes a way of salvation for us.

Today beings above keep festival with those below, and those below have fellowship with those above.

Today the sacred and triumphant festal assembly of the Orthodox is joyful.

Today the Master hurries towards baptism, so that he may lead the human race to the heights.

Today the *Lord* who does not bow, bows down to his own servant, so that he may free us from slavery.

Today we have purchased the Kingdom of heaven, for the Kingdom of the Lord will have no end.

Today earth and sea share the joy of the world, and the world has been filled with gladness. The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and were afraid.

The Jordan turned back when it saw the fire of the Divinity as it descended in bodily form and entered it.

The Jordan turned back when it contemplated the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove as it descended and flew around you.

The Jordan turned back when it saw the Invisible *Lord* made visible, the Creator made flesh, the Master in the form of a servant.

The Jordan turned back and mountains leapt when they saw God in the flesh.

The clouds gave out their voice and marvelled at what had come to pass. They saw Light from Light, true God from true God and the Master's festival today in Jordan. They saw him when he drowned the death from disobedience, the provocation of error, the bond of Hades in the Jordan and the granting of the Baptism of salvation to the world. Therefore I too, a sinner and your unworthy servant, recount the greatness of your wonders and, although I am seized with fear, I cry out to you with contrition.]

O Lord, you are great and your works are marvellous; no word is sufficient to sing about the praise of your wonders. X3
Glory to you, Lord, glory to you! X3

For you brought the inhabited earth from non-existence into being through your will. You hold creation together by your might. You direct the world with your providence. You composed creation

from the four elements. You crowned the circle of the year with the four seasons. All the spiritual Powers tremble before you. The sun sings your praise, the moon glorifies you, the stars plead with you, the light obeys you, the deeps tremble before you, the springs are your servants. You stretched out the heavens on the waters. You walled in the sea with sand. You poured out the air for breathing. Angelic Powers minister to you. The choirs of the Archangels worship you. The many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, as they stand and fly around you, hide their faces in fear from your unapproachable glory. For although you were God uncircumscribed, without beginning and inexpressible, you came to earth, took the form of a servant and were found in the likeness of men. For you could not bear, O Master, in the compassion of your mercy to watch the human race being oppressed by the devil, but you came and saved us. We acknowledge your grace, we proclaim your mercy, we do not conceal your kindness. You freed the generations of our race. You sanctified a virgin womb by your birth. All creation sang your praise when you appeared. For you are our God who appeared on earth and lived among mortals. You sanctified the streams of Jordan by sending down from heaven your all-holy Spirit and destroyed the heads of the dragons who lurked there.

+Therefore, O King, Lover of the human race, be present also at this time through the visitation of your Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. X3

Give it the grace of redemption and the blessing of Jordan. Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, an emancipation from sins, an averting of diseases, unapproachable by hostile powers and filled with angelic strength. May all those who draw from it and partake of it, have it for cleansing of souls and bodies, for healing of passions, for sanctification of homes and for every suitable purpose.

For you are our God, who through water and Spirit renewed our nature made old by sin.
You are our God, who in the days of Noah drowned sin through the water of the flood.
You are our God, who through Moses freed the Hebrew race from the slavery of Pharaoh through the sea.
You are our God who split open the rock in the desert. The waters rushed out, torrents flooded and you satisfied your thirsty people.
You are our God who through Elias turned Israel from the error of Baal.

And now, O Master, sanctify this water by your Holy Spirit. X3

Give to all who partake of it sanctification, blessing, cleansing and health. O Lord, remember our Archbishop N., the whole order of Presbyters, the Diaconate in Christ, every rank of the clergy, the people here present and our brothers who with good reason are absent. Have mercy on us in accordance with your great mercy, so that through elements, through angels, through mortals, through things visible and through things unseen, your all-holy name may be glorified, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

P: Peace be with you all! R: And with your spirit.
P: Bow down your heads to the Lord! R: To you, O Lord.

O Lord, you accepted baptism in the Jordan and have sanctified the waters, so bow your ear and listen to us. Bless us all, who signify our calling as servants by bending our necks. Count us worthy to be filled with your sanctification through partaking from and sprinkling with this water. O Lord, let it bring us healing of soul and body. For you are the sanctification of our souls and bodies, and to you we give glory, thanksgiving and worship, together with your Father who is without beginning, and your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Apolytikion

Tone 1

O Lord, when you were baptised in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was revealed. For the voice of the Father witnessed to you and called you his dear Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his word. O Christ our God, you have revealed yourself and enlightened the world; glory to you!

Kontákion Tone 4

Tone 4

O Lord, you have appeared today to the inhabited earth and your light has shone on us, for we praise you with understanding. "O unapproachable Light, you have come and revealed yourself."

Sticherón

Tone 6

O faithful, let us praise the greatness of God's dispensation towards us. He became man because of our offences. The uniquely undefiled and pure *Lord* was cleansed in the Jordan so that we might be purified. He has sanctified both us and the waters; he has crushed the heads of the dragons. O brothers, let us then draw water with joy. To those who draw with faith the grace of the Spirit is invisibly given by Christ our God *who is* the Saviour of our souls.