

THE TRADITION OF THE

Theophany House Blessing

During the days following the Feast of the Theophany (January 6th), it is customary for the Priest to visit the homes of his parishioners, bringing with him the “Jordan Water” for the traditional Theophany House Blessing.¹ All who reside in the household should make every effort to be present for the Blessing.

In anticipation of the arrival of the Priest to the house, the lampada, hand-censer and incense in the family’s icon corner should be prepared. (If there is no icon corner, a small table should be placed on the eastern wall of the main room of the dwelling; the table, covered with a white cloth, should be set with one or more icons standing upright, a candle in a candlestand, a hand-censer and incense). A small bowl along with several sprigs of evergreen bound together with a ribbon should also be placed in the icon corner (or on the table), along with a clearly printed list of the Baptismal names of the members of the household.

Upon the arrival of the Priest, he is to be greeted by all of the family members, each of whom asks the Priest’s blessing and reverences his right hand. Then a family member lights the lampada (or candle) and hand-censer and turns off all televisions, radios, etc. in the home. Lights should be turned on in all the rooms of the house that are to be blessed. Then the entire family gathers with the Priest before the icon corner (or table) to begin the Theophany House Blessing.

The Priest, vested in cassock and exorasson and facing the icons, blesses and dons his epitachelion saying the usual vesting prayer. He then places incense upon the lighted charcoal in the hand-censer and blesses it saying the usual prayer. He then places his hand-cross at the icon corner (or on the table) and, after pouring “Jordan Water” into the bowl provided by the family, he blesses himself while intoning:

PRIEST: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

ALL: Amen.

PRIEST: Glory to Thee, our God. Glory to Thee.

O heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things, the Treasury of good things and Giver of life:

¹ The First Great Sanctification of Water is performed at the end of the Divine Liturgy on the Paramon of Theophany (January 5th). While that water may be given to the faithful to drink on that day and throughout the coming year, it is only the water from the Second Great Sanctification, which is performed on the day of the Feast of Theophany (January 6th), that is used for the Theophany House Blessing.

Come, and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O good One.

ALL: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (*thrice*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

PRIEST: For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

ALL: Amen.

Then the Priest leads all in the chanting of the Apolytikion of Theophany in Tone 1:

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the likeness of a dove, confirmed the truth of His word. O Christ our God, who hast appeared and enlightened the world, glory to Thee.²

PRIEST: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

PRIEST: Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

² The following boxed text, the Ektenia and the Peace, may be omitted for the sake of brevity.

PRIEST: Again we pray for our Metropolitan *N.*, our Bishop *N.*, and all our brotherhood in Christ.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

PRIEST: Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation and pardon and forgiveness of sins for the servants of God, (*we mention by name all those who dwell in the house that is to be blessed*) *NN.*, and for all pious and Orthodox Christians who live and dwell in this community.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*)

PRIEST: For Thou art a merciful God and lovest mankind, and unto Thee we ascribe glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

ALL: Amen.

Turning to face the people, the Priest blesses them, saying:

PRIEST: + Peace be to all.

ALL: And to thy spirit.

PRIEST: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

ALL: To Thee, O Lord.

All bow their heads as the Priest faces the icons and prays:

PRIEST: Let us pray to the Lord.

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

PRIEST: Our God our Saviour, the True Light, who wast baptized by John in the Jordan to renew all men by the water of regeneration, and who didst condescend to enter under the roof of Zacchaeus, and didst thereby bring salvation to him and all his household: Do Thou now also, the same Lord, keep safe from harm all those who dwell herein. Vouchsafe them sanctification, purification and health of body, and grant their petitions which are unto salvation and life everlasting: For blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory together with Thine unoriginate Father and Thine all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

ALL: Amen.

Then the head of the household takes up a lighted candle and leads through the house the Priest, who carries the bowl of “Jordan Water” and, using his hand-cross together with the bound sprigs of evergreen, sprinkles each room with the “Jordan Water.” It is customary that he sprinkle each doorway upon the lintel and at each side. During the Theophany season (January 6th through the Leavetaking on January 14th) the festal Apolytikion “When Thou, O Lord wast baptized ...” is chanted repeatedly throughout the House Blessing; but should the House Blessing take place after the Leavetaking, the Apolytikion of the Cross (also in Tone 1) “O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance...” is chanted rather than that of Theophany. The other members of the household may walk behind the Priest if they wish or they may remain at the icon corner (or table). The procession through the house ends at the icon corner (or table). The Priest replaces the bowl and sprigs of evergreen in the icon corner (or on the table), and, holding the hand-cross and facing the people, he says the Dismissal:

PRIEST: Glory to Thee, O Christ our God and our Hope. Glory to Thee.

ALL: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Father, bless.

PRIEST: May He who deigned to be baptized by John in the Jordan for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother, at the supplications of (*the Patron Saint of the local church temple*), of the holy and righteous ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, and of all the saints: have mercy on us, and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

ALL: Amen.

Again facing the holy icons, the Priest holds the hand-cross and intones:

PRIEST: Grant, O Lord, a peaceful life, health, salvation and furtherance in all good things to Thy servant(s), (*we mention by name all those who dwell in the house that has been blessed*) NN., and preserve him/her/them for many years!

He turns and blesses the people thrice with the hand-cross as all sing the “Many years.”

Those who dwell in the house then approach the Priest to reverence the hand-cross and his hand, and to be blessed with the “Jordan Water.”

It should be noted that it is customary for the head of the household to discreetly present the Priest with an envelope containing an honorarium and a list of the Living and Departed for whom the family requests his prayers during the New Year.