

has many children. What was announced by the star to the magi in Bethlehem is now revealed to the world by the Father himself.

- 199 The Son of God, "who covers himself with light as with a garment ... today is covered by the streams of the Jordan." Christ himself "has no need to be cleansed by them; but through the cleansing that he himself receives he bestows regeneration on us."¹⁶⁸ "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness'" (Mt 3:13-15). The God-man enters into the Jordan waters: "Asa man he came to be baptized, and the Jordan feared him as God and turned back. Asa man he bared himself and entered the water, and the Father testified that he was God, saying: "This is my beloved Son."¹⁶⁹
- 200 Christ brings regeneration to humankind, and he chooses the waters of the Jordan to signify this. In Holy Scripture, water is a symbol of elemental forces and death, and simultaneously a symbol of cleansing, rebirth, life, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. By means of water, God "drowned sin ... in the days of Noah ... [and] at the hand of Moses he set free the Hebrew nation from the bondage of Pharaoh ... [and] by fire and water through Elijah brought back Israel from the error of Baal."¹⁷⁰ By immersion into water (baptism), Christ washes away the record of Adam's sins. The waters of the Jordan regenerate all creation. In the Jordan, Christ "has renewed through water and the Spirit our nature grown old through sin."¹⁷¹
- 201 "Transformed into waters of healing," the waters of the Jordan become "a source of incorruption." For by means of water, God offers to the world "a salvation of baptism." Upon receiving it, a human being and all creation are filled with "mysterious streams." With the sanctification of the human being begins the sanctification and eschatological (from the Greek, meaning final) transfiguring of creation.
- 202 In the Ukrainian Christian tradition, the symbolism of Jordan water is closely connected with the memory of the Baptism of Rus-Ukraine by Grand Prince Volodymyr. The river Dnipro, in which the people of Kyiv were baptized, is figuratively called the "Ukrainian Jordan." On

¹⁶⁸ Menaion, Holy Theophany of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ (January 6/19), Great Compline, Stichera for Lytia.

¹⁶⁹ ILARION, METROPOLITAN OF KYIV, Sermon on Law and Grace, 26.

¹⁷⁰ Trebnyk, Rite of the Great Blessing of Water for the Feast of Theophany, Third Prayer.

¹⁷¹ Trebnyk, Rite of the Great Blessing of Water for the Feast of Theophany, Third Prayer.

the feast of Theophany in Ukraine, an ice cross is erected as a sign and a memorial of baptism; during the Great Blessing of Water, three triple-branched candles are immersed into the waters. Bringing the holy water home, the faithful partake of it at the beginning of the Theophany Eve supper Shchedryi vechir (Ukrainian, meaning Abundantly Generous Eve). They bless their homes and farms, and keep the water throughout the year to partake of it, and to bless themselves in times of difficulty and illness.

*And having lived in this world,
giving us saving commandments, and turning us from the error of idols,
he brought us to the knowledge of you, the true God and Father,
and acquired us for himself as a people all his own, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.
And when he had cleansed us by water and sanctified us by the Holy Spirit,
he gave himself as an exchange to death.
(Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)*

2. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

203 Christ began his public ministry with the proclamation: "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mk 1:15). The kingdom of God is personified in Jesus Christ. One becomes a participant of the kingdom through faith in Christ and by holy Baptism: "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:16; see also Jn 3:5). We were created for the kingdom of God: "Whatever good things are sown in the human soul, these are the offspring of the kingdom of God and have been sown by God the Word, who was in the beginning with God."¹⁷² the kingdom of God is the will of the Father, announced by the Son and fulfilled in the Holy Spirit. This "Blessed ... kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" will last "forever and ever."

a. The Announcement of the Kingdom:

b. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)

204 An "icon in words" that portrays the kingdom of God is the Sermon on the Mount, especially the Beatitudes announced by Christ:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.*

¹⁷² ORIGEN, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, 10,2: PG 13, 837.