

THE ORDER

OF THE GREAT SANCTIFICATION OF WATERS OF HOLY THEOPHANY

Preparatory Notes

According to the *Typikon*, the Great Sanctification of Waters sometimes is performed at the end of Divine Liturgy, after the Prayer Before the Ambon, and sometimes at the end of Vespers, after the Litany, “Let us complete our evening prayer...” It is performed at the end of the Divine Liturgy on the day of Theophany itself, and on the Eve of Theophany, when the Eve will be on any weekday except Saturday or Sunday. If the Eve of Theophany will be on Saturday or Sunday, then the Great Sanctification will be at the end of Vespers. On the Eve it is performed in the Baptismal font in the Narthex. On the Day of Theophany itself, it is performed outside the church, at a body of water (or at a specially prepared font), in the form of a festive Cross-Procession (“walking to the Jordan”). (If this not be feasible, as is often the case, the Great Sanctification is performed in the church itself.)

When the Sanctification of Waters will be performed together with a Cross-Procession, then the Priest, vested in Epitrachelion and Phelonion, censes the Cross lying on the Holy Table three times. After this, having given up the censer, he takes up the Cross and, holding it upon his head, exits through the Royal Gates. Before him goes the Deacon (if there be one) with a candlestick, and before them two candlebearers; and before all of them go two carrying banners, one of whom also carries the Gospel Book. (If there be more than one Priest, the Gospel Book is carried by one of the Priests.) In this order they go to where the water is. Having arrived at the place, the Priest takes the Cross from his head, makes the Sign of the Cross with it over the people from four sides, and places the Cross on the table prepared for it. But if the water be in a vessel, the Cross is set on the edge of it.

A small table is prepared as at the *Lesser Sanctification of Waters*.

After the Priest has said the Prayer Before the Ambon, we all go to the Baptismal font (or the place where the Sanctification will be performed), the candlebearers going in front, and after then the Deacon and Priest with the Gospel Book, Censer (and Cross), while the brethren sing the following Troparia, TONE 8:

The voice of the Lord upon the waters cries out, saying: “Come, receive all of you the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, of Christ Who is made manifest.” (*thrice*)

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified, and the Jordan is divided, and turns back the streams of its own waters, beholding the Master baptized. *(twice)*

As a man Thou didst come to the river, O Christ the King, hastening to receive the baptism of a servant, O Good One, at the hand of the Forerunner, because of our sins, O Lover of Mankind. *(twice)*

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

(SAME TONE) Taking the form of a servant, O Lord, Thou didst come to the voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord”, asking for baptism, O Thou Who knowest not sin. The waters saw Thee and were afraid. The Forerunner began to tremble and cried out, saying: “How shall the lamp illumine the Light? How shall the servant lay hands upon the Master? Sanctify me and the waters, O Savior, Who takest away the sins of the world.”

And immediately, standing by the baptismal font, the Deacon says:

Wisdom.

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *(Isaiah 35:1–10)*

Thus says the Lord: Let the thirsty desert be glad, let the wilderness rejoice and blossom like a lily, and let them sprout and be exceedingly glad. And let the wilderness of Jordan rejoice, for the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, and the honor of Carmel; and My people shall see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of God. You weak hands, be strengthened, and be comforted, you feeble knees; and say unto them that are fainthearted in intention: Be strong, and fear not! Behold, our God will render judgment, He will come and save us! Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear. Then shall the lame leap as a stag, and the tongues of them that stutter shall be clear; for in the desert shall water burst forth, and forests in a thirsty land. And waterless lands shall become pools, and in the thirsty land shall be a fountain of water. The joy of birds shall be there, the habitations of *owls*, reeds and marshes. A pure way shall be there, and it shall be called a holy way; and the unclean shall not pass by there, neither shall an unclean way be there. But they that were dispersed shall walk on it; and they shall not lose their way. And no lion shall be there, nor shall any evil beast enter there, or be found there; but the redeemed and chosen of the Lord shall walk therein. And they shall return and come to Sion with joy and gladness;

and eternal joy shall be upon their heads. Praise and joy and gladness shall seize them; sickness, sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: (*Isaiah 55:1–13*)

Thus says the Lord: You that thirst, go to the water, and as many as have no money, come and buy; and eat and drink, wine and fat without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken unto Me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight in good things. Incline your ears, and follow in My ways; hearken unto Me, and your soul shall live amidst good things; and I will promise you an everlasting covenant, even faithful things befitting David. Behold, I have given him to be a witness unto the nations; a prince and a commander unto the nations.* Behold, nations which knew thee not shall call upon thee; and peoples that knew thee not shall flee unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, for I have glorified thee.

Seek God, and when you have found Him, call upon Him. And when He shall draw near unto you, let the ungodly depart from his ways, and the lawless man from his counsels; and return unto the Lord your God, and you shall be pitied, for He shall abundantly pardon your sins.

For My counsels are not as your counsels, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heaven stands far from the earth, so stands My way from your ways, and your thoughts from My thoughts. For as the rain or the snow comes down from heaven, and returns not there, until it waters the earth, and it brings forth and sprouts, and gives seed to the sower, and bread for food, so shall My word be, whatever shall proceed out of my mouth. And it shall not return to Me empty until it has accomplished all that I have purposed; and it will assist My ways, and My commandments. For you shall go forth with joy and be taught with gladness; for the mountains and the hills shall skip, expecting you with joy; and all the trees of the field shall clap with their branches. And instead of the bramble shall come up the cypress; and instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle. And it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an eternal sign; and it shall not fail.

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: (*Isaiah 12:3–6*)

Thus says the Lord: You shall draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation. And thou shalt say in that day: Give praise unto the Lord, and call upon His name; declare His glory unto the nations, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing the name of the Lord, for He has done excellent things; declare these things in all the earth. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, you that dwell in Sion, for the Holy One of Israel is exalted in the midst thereof!

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the Third Tone:

(Prokeimenon, **TONE 3:**)

The Lord is my Light and my Savior; Whom, then, shall I fear? (26:1)

Choir: The Lord is my Light and my Savior; Whom, then, shall I fear?

Reader: **Vs.** The Lord is the Defender of my life; of whom, then, shall I be afraid? (26:1)

Choir: The Lord is my Light and my Savior; Whom, then, shall I fear?

Reader: The Lord is my Light and my Savior.

Choir: Whom, then, shall I fear?

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: The Reading from the First Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

Deacon: Let us attend.

*The Reader reads the Lesson from the **Apostol:***

The Epistle to the Corinthians (*Pericope 143 from ctr—1 Cor. 10:1–4*):

Brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant of how all of our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Deacon: Wisdom.

Reader: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

(Alleluia, **TONE 4**)

Choir: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Reader: **Vs.** The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory has thundered, the Lord is upon the many waters. (28:3)

Choir: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Deacon: Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Priest: The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to *Saint Mark*.

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Deacon: Let us attend.

The Priest reads the Gospel:

The Gospel according to Mark (*Pericope 2—Mark 1:9–11*):

At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens parted, and the Spirit, as a dove, descending upon Him. And there came a voice from Heaven, “Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Choir: Glory to Thee, O our God, glory to Thee.

Then the Deacon says this Litany:

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (*after each petition*)

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

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 this holy house and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and the fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

For our Metropolitan (*N.*); for our Bishop [*or Archbishop*] (*N.*); for the honorable Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

For the President of our country, for all civil authorities, and for the armed forces, let us pray to the Lord.

For this city, [*if a monastery*: For this holy habitation,] for every city and country, and for the faithful dwelling in them, let us pray to the Lord.

For reasonable weather, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

For travelers by land, by sea, and by air; for the sick and the suffering; for captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

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

That there may come upon this water the purifying operation of the supersubstantial Trinity, let us pray to the Lord.

That there may be granted unto them the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan, by the power, operation and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That satan may quickly be crushed under our feet, and that every evil counsel directed against us may be brought to ruin, let us pray to the Lord.

That the Lord God may deliver us from every attack and temptation of the adversary, and count us worthy of the good things that are promised, let us pray to the Lord.

That we may be illumined with the illumination of understanding and piety, through the descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That the Lord God will send down the blessing of Jordan, and sanctify these waters, let us pray to the Lord.

That this water may be a gift of sanctification, and a deliverance from sins, for the healing of soul and body, and for every good purpose, let us pray to the Lord.

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

That it may be shown to be the averting of every snare of enemies, visible and invisible, let us pray to the Lord.

For them that draw of it and take of it for the sanctification of their homes, let us pray to the Lord.

That it may be to the cleansing of soul and body of all that with faith draw and partake of it, let us pray to the Lord.

That we may be counted worthy to be filled with sanctification through the partaking of these waters, by the invisible manifestation of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That the Lord God may hearken unto the voice of supplication of us sinners, and have mercy upon us, let us pray to the Lord.

For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

And while the Deacon is saying these, the Priest says this Prayer to himself, secretly:

If there be no Deacon, the Priest reads the Prayer, including “Amen”, secretly after the Litany.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son, Who art in the bosom of the Father, O True God, Fountain of life and immortality, O Light from light, that camest into the world to enlighten it: Do Thou illumine our mind by Thy Holy Spirit, and accept us who are offering majesty and thanksgiving unto Thee for Thy wondrous and mighty works which are from the ages, and for Thy saving Providence in these latter ages, in which Thou hast clothed Thyself in our weak and poor substance, and, condescending to the estate of a servant, Who art King of all, didst furthermore suffer to be baptized in Jordan by the hand of a servant, that Thou, O Sinless One, having sanctified the nature of water, mightest lead us unto regeneration by water and the Spirit, and restore us to our first freedom. Celebrating the memory of this Divine Mystery, we pray Thee, O Master, the Lover of Mankind: Sprinkle upon us, Thine unworthy servants, according to Thy divine promise, pure water, the gift of Thy deep compassion, that the prayer of us sinners over this water may be acceptable through Thy grace, and that through it Thy blessing may be granted unto us and unto all Thy faithful people, to the glory of Thy holy and adorable Name. For unto Thee is due all glory, honor and worship, together with Thy Father Who is without beginning, and Thy Most-holy, Good and Lifegiving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

And he says to himself, "Amen".

And when the Deacon has finished the Litany, the Priest begins this Prayer with a loud voice:

Great art Thou, O Lord, and wondrous are Thy works; and no word shall be sufficient to hymn Thy wonders. (*thrice*)

For Thou, by Thy will, from nothingness hast brought all things into being, by Thy might Thou upholdest creation, and by Thy providence Thou orderest the world. From four elements Thou hast formed creation; Thou hast crowned the course of the year with four seasons. All the rational powers tremble before Thee. The sun hymns Thee. The moon glorifies Thee. The stars meet together before Thee. The light hearkens unto Thee. The deeps shudder before Thee. The springs of water serve Thee. Thou hast stretched out the heaven as a curtain. Thou hast established the earth upon the waters. Thou hast bounded the sea with sand. Thou hast spilled out the air for breathing. The Angelic Powers serve Thee. The choirs of Archangels worship Thee. The many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, standing and flying round about, cover themselves with fear at Thine unapproachable glory. For Thou, who art God inexpressible, unoriginate, and ineffable, didst come down upon earth, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man. For Thou, O Master, for the sake of Thy tender mercy, couldst not endure to behold the race of man tormented by the devil; but Thou didst come and save us. We confess Thy grace. We proclaim Thy mercy. We conceal not Thy benevolent acts. Thou hast liberated the nature of our race. Thou didst sanctify the Virginal womb by Thy nativity. All creation sings the praises of Thee who hast manifested Thyself. For Thou, O our God, hast revealed Thyself upon earth, and hast dwelt among men. Thou didst sanctify the streams of Jordan, sending down from heaven Thy Holy Spirit, and didst crush the heads of the dragons that lurked therein.

Then the Priest says the following thrice, blessing the water with his hand at each repetition:

Do Thou Thyself, O King, the Lover of mankind, come now through the descent of Thy Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water.

And give it the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a loosing of sins, a healing of sicknesses, a destruction of demons, unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic might, that all them that draw and partake of it may have it for the cleansing of souls and bodies, for the healing of sufferings, for the sanctification of homes, and for every useful purpose. For Thou art our God, Who through water and the Spirit hast renewed our nature grown old through sin. Thou art our God, Who through water didst drown sin in the days of Noah. Thou art our God, Who

through the sea, by Moses, didst free the Hebrew race from the slavery of Pharaoh. Thou art our God, Who didst cleave the rock in the Wilderness, and it gushed forth waters and poured out streams, and satisfied Thy thirsty people. Thou art our God, Who through water and fire, by Elijah, didst convert Israel from the delusion of Ba'al.

And do Thou Thyself, O Master, sanctify now this water by Thy Holy Spirit.
(thrice)

And grant unto all them that touch it, and partake of it, and anoint themselves with it, sanctification, health, cleansing and blessing.

Save, O Lord, and be merciful unto our Metropolitan, *N.*, our Bishop [*or* Archbishop], *N.*, the Priests, Priestmonks, the Deaconate in Christ, all the clergy and people her present, together with our brethren who are absent for just cause.

Save, O Lord, our faithful rulers.

And preserve them under Thy protection in peace, and subdue under them every enemy and adversary, granting all their petitions which are for salvation and life eternal, that by the elements, by men and angels, by things visible and invisible, Thy Most-holy Name may be glorified, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Deacon: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

And the Priest, bowing his head, says this Prayer:

Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hearken unto us, Who didst will to be baptized in the Jordan, and didst sanctify the waters. And bless all of us who, through the bending of our necks, signify our servitude. And count us worthy to be filled with Thy sanctification by partaking of this water. And may it be to us, O Lord, for the healing of soul and body.

Exclamation:

For Thou art our sanctification, and unto Thee do we send up glory, thanksgiving and worship, together with Thy Father Who is without beginning, and Thy Most-holy, Good and Lifegiving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

*And immediately, blessing the water in crosswise form with the Precious Cross, he dips it perpendicularly, sinking it in the water and raising it, holding it by the crossbars with both hands, and singing this Troparion, **TONE 1**:*

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, and called 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!

*And the same is sung by the Choir. Again, a second time, in like manner the Priest signs the water; and likewise a third time. Each time the Priest signs the water, the Choir sings the Troparion a second and a third time. Then the Priest takes some of the sanctified water in a bowl, and turns to face the west. He holds the Cross in his left hand and the sprinkler (an aspergillus or branch of basil) in his right hand. Then all approach and kiss the Precious Cross, and the Priest signs each in the face with the sanctified water. (If there be other clergy, they come forward first, according to rank; and after them the members of the monastic community, according to rank, if it be a monastery; and after them the faithful.) And the Troparion is sung many times, until everyone has been sanctified by the sprinkling of the water. And immediately all go into the temple, singing, in **TONE 6**:*

Let us sing, O Faithful, the greatness of God's dispensation for us, for He Who became a man for our transgressions, and Who alone is pure and incorrupt, was cleansed in the Jordan for our cleansing, that He might sanctify me and the waters, and crush the heads of the serpents in the water. Let us draw water in gladness, O brethren, for unto them that draw water in faith, the grace of the Spirit is invisibly given by Christ, the God and Savior of our souls.

Then:

Blessed be the Name of the Lord, henceforth and forevermore. (*thrice*)

Psalm 33(4)

I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my troubles. Draw nigh unto Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be put to shame. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord will encamp around them that fear Him, and will deliver them.

O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that hopes in Him. O fear the Lord, all you His saints; for there is no want for them that fear Him. The

rich have become poor and have hungered; but they that seek the Lord shall lack no good thing.

Come, O children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is the man that desires life, who loves to see days that are good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they not speak deceit. Turn away from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears unto their supplication. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are broken in heart, and will save them that are humble in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, and out of them all shall the Lord deliver them. The Lord keeps all of their bones; not one of them shall be broken. The death of sinners is cruel, and they that hate the righteous shall do wrong. The Lord will redeem the soul of His servants, and none of them shall do wrong that hope in Him.

And first having drunk of the sanctified water, everyone receives the Antidoron from the Priest. And he makes the Full Dismissal:

May He Who deigned to be baptized by John in the Jordan for our salvation, Christ our True God, through the prayers of His Most-pure Mother, and of all the Saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and the Lover of Mankind.