

Epiphany II

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. There is a word that every Christian should be familiar with, and that is the term theophany.

Theophany. The definition of theophany simply means the revelation of our triune God to his people. Prior to the birth of Jesus, God revealed himself in a somewhat hidden manner.

Martin Luther called it the Mass of God, or we can even say the Disguises of God. But here in our Gospel text, which records the baptism of Jesus in Mark chapter 1, the revelation of our triune God is unmasked and now shared with the world.

No longer is the revelation of God hidden. The revelation of God is greater than the mysterious messenger who wrestled with Jacob, or the one who stood before Moses in the burning bush, or the fourth man in the fiery furnace that stood next to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

The revelation of our triune God takes center stage at the baptism of Jesus to reveal that the Mass have now come off. God has come to his people here on earth.

[1 : 32] And that's why our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters kick the epiphany season off with the reading of the baptism of our Lord, not the story of the Magi.

The word epiphany simply means revelation or manifestation. And the word theophany speaks to what was truly revealed to all mankind, which is the triune God to whom we all owe our allegiance and our worship.

God is one in essence, or he is one in being. And yet he is three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In our gospel text, Jesus is baptized and suddenly the heavens open up like a curtain. The significance is that Jesus has brought about a new exodus.

And now a greater promised land, the kingdom of God, is ours in Christ. Our Lord steps forward as the great deliverer of his people, greater than even the esteemed Moses.

[2 : 48] And all the oppressors of God's people will now be dealt with. The tyrants, however, are not merely the Egyptians, the Assyrians, Babylonians, or even the Romans.

The great enemy that seeks to destroy all is sin and pride. Selfishness is the agenda. It is the catechism of Satan, the father of all lies.

And the mission of Satan and his demons is to alienate us from our creator and our God for all eternity. Jesus enters the waters of the Jordan River to begin the great reversal of this curse on all human beings, which will lead him to the cross, to the tomb, to Hades, where he will declare his victory over death and hell, and then back to this earth to appear to many, who will then witness and proclaim our Lord's resurrection and renewal of life.

And like at his baptism, when the heavens open, so at his ascension, the heavens depart to welcome their victorious king. Jesus takes our flesh into eternity and bestows on all who believe in him, his life, his immortality, as we are now made sons of God through holy baptism.

We are united with Christ, and now we share in the fellowship of the blessed Trinity. The voice of the Father speaks of his pleasure here in Mark chapter 1 upon the eternal and everlasting Son of God, affirming his omission as the antidote to the oppression and slavery that comes from sin.

[4 : 48] And Jesus brings forth liberation from the tyranny of pride and selfishness that seeks power and dominion over all the earth. And the voice that comes from the heavens is one of authority, that same authority that spoke the world into existence.

And the Father states his pleasure for his son's obedience in beginning his mission of redemption. And this begins here at his baptism.

And the Holy Spirit then descends on Jesus like the anointing of a great king at his coronation because Jesus has come to reclaim that which is his, all of creation, including you, his beloved children.

And what comes out of those waters of baptism is not death and destruction, like in the days of Noah. It is the ark of salvation. It is the very body of our God who has come, taking upon himself our human flesh.

Our Lord went into the destructive waters of the Jordan in order to make them a water of life that births forth his newborn children.

[6 : 09] St. John the Baptist had been baptizing people who confess their sins in anticipation of their long-awaited Savior and King. Jesus does not confess any sin because he is the sinless God who has come to bring life and hope from the waters of death and to lead his people to the promised land of his kingdom where there is eternal communion with God and with all those saints like St. John the Baptist who live a life of yielding to God in humility and faith.

Therefore, dear friends, going back to where we started, the word theophany means the revelation of our triune God to his people. We celebrate this manifestation, this revelation of our triune God in the baptism of Jesus as the voice of the Father and the anointing of the Spirit sets the Savior up on center stage as the only hope for the world and the only way to eternal life.

Our Lord comes hidden to us today in water, bread, wine, and through the voices of our bishops and our priests. And he does this to connect us to what was revealed to the world at our Lord's baptism.

Our Savior, our Redeemer, our Lamb, and our Shepherd. The God who gives life and salvation to all who repent and follow him.

And what is hidden now will be fully revealed once more when our Shepherd comes back to take us home for all eternity.

[8 : 05] Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.