

The Feasts of the Lord

“The event of Christ’s Baptism by John the Forerunner in the River Jordan is called Theophany and Epiphany. In the early Church the feasts of the Nativity and the Theophany were celebrated together on the same day (6th January). In the fourth century the feasts were separated, and Christmas was transferred to 25th December, the day on which the Gentiles celebrated the sun god and the Christians the Sun of righteousness...

Many characterisations have been given of John the Forerunner. The word John means gift of God. The forerunner is the one who goes ahead on the way, that is to say the precursor of the Messiah. He is called the Baptist because he baptised Christ. In the canon of the Theophany St Cosmas the Poet, Bishop of Maiouma, characterises him with three expressions: the voice of the Word, candlestick of the light, forerunner of the sun...

The Fathers teach that there are many kinds of baptism. St Gregory the Theologian teaches that there are five kinds. The first is that of Moses, which gives temporary purification. The second is that of the Forerunner, who baptised people with the Baptism of repentance. The third is Christ’s Baptism, through which people become Christians; it is performed by the energy of the Holy Spirit. The fourth is that of martyrdom and blood, and the fifth is that of repentance and tears...

By His Baptism in the River Jordan Christ blessed the water as well. That is why even today we perform the service of the blessing of the waters and during the celebration we call upon the Holy Spirit to bless the waters. Thus after the blessing it ceases to be water of the fall and becomes water of renewal, since it is united with the uncreated grace of God.”

The Divine Theophany