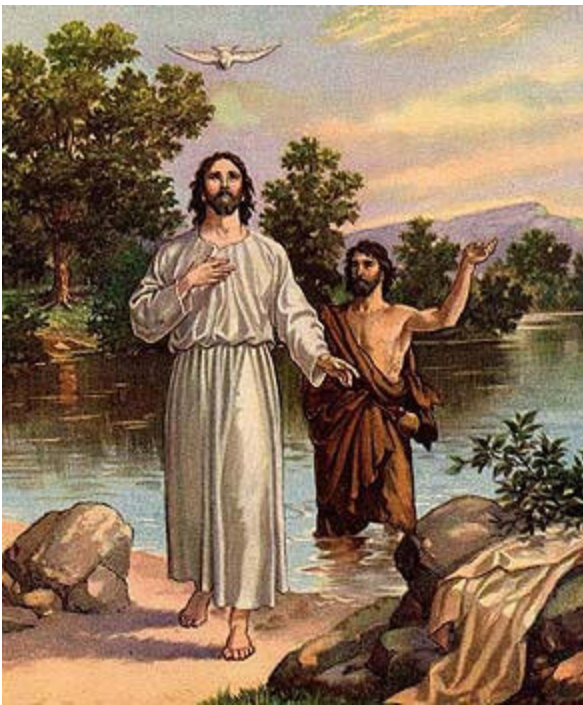


January 11, 2015: The Sunday after the Epiphany (The beginning of the Lord's ministry)

Epistle reading: Eph. 4:7-13:

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things). And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;"

Gospel reading: Mat. 4:12-17:



"Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

With the Sunday after the Lord's Baptism or God's revelation (Epiphany), the Orthodox Church concludes the series of the three Royal Feasts celebrated in less than a month: The Lord's Nativity, Circumcision and Baptism.

In the Epistle reading of this Sunday, St. Paul is telling us that each one of us, as members of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church, have received certain gifts: *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."* These gifts constitute the assignment, the ministry, the role, each one of us ought to play in order to

contribute to the proper functioning of this Body (the Church, all of us), whose ultimate goal is spiritual perfection: *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;"*

In the Gospel reading, St. Matthew is quoting from the prophet Isaiah in order to show that in the person of the incarnate Son of God all prophecies are fulfilled: *"And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali...""*

Indeed, Messiah, the Son of God is the fulfillment of all prophecies of the Old Testament. This is why, since the incarnation of Christ there was no need for other prophets because God revealed Himself to the world through the sending of His only-Begotten Son. The reading concludes with the first public message/warning addressed by Christ to the world: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

By using the message of St. John the Baptist, Christ is telling us the even though John had been arrested (and ultimately would be killed), the message lives on. Only this time the message carries much greater weight because it comes from God Himself, the Word made flesh.

Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!

Fr. George Bazgan

Sunday Fellowship

**The following families are scheduled to look after
this Sunday's fellowship:**

**Dorobanțu Petre & Loredana
Gavriș Marius & Ileana
Tănăsoiu Horia & Camelia**

Thank you all very much!

A Christian's conduct in Church

Before I begin to address the topic of „church conduct,” it is important to address the question „Why do we come to church?”

We come to church on Sundays (the Day of the Lord) in order to reaffirm our vocation as liturgical beings, to continue our spiritual growth and to strengthen our communion with Christ and His Church which began when we were accepted into the community of the faithful through the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Christmation and Holy Eucharist (Communion).

For an Orthodox Christian, attending the Divine Liturgy is not only a privilege but an obligation as well. It is a privilege in as much as we, as members of the visible Church are called to bring the Eucharistic elements (bread and wine), be part of their transformation into the Body and Blood of Christ and then, partake of them in the form of the Holy Eucharist, all this in the context of the Divine Liturgy, the highest form of prayer we can offer to God. It is also our obligation to attend the Divine Liturgy, obeying thus one of the commandments of the Church.

In order to benefit the most from our presence in Church we must keep in mind a few rules:

1. We should to come to Church on time (before 10:00) in order to partake of the entire Divine Liturgy.
2. If the service is already in progress, we must stop and see what is going on. If we came in during the Scripture readings (Epistle or the Gospel), we should wait at the back of the church until the reading is over and then, quietly, take our seats.
3. We should pick up the liturgical books and follow closely the service, reading all prayers.
4. During the Divine Liturgy we are not allowed to talk to other people. We can do that at the end, during the fellowship.

Fr. George Bazgan