

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle  
Orthodox Church**

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM**

**Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM**

**Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM | Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**~ Divine Liturgy 10 AM ~**

**January 12, 2025 – Sunday After/Afterfeast of  
Theophany | Martyr Tatiana**

At Vespers of Great Feasts, the so-called narratives (paremoias) are read, which are usually excerpts from the books of the Old Testament. They set out the events of former times, reminiscent and even explaining what the Holy Church celebrates on a given day. On the greatest feasts, the number of narratives, usually not exceeding three, greatly increases, and on the day of the Resurrection of Christ it reaches fifteen, and on the day of Theophany – thirteen.

When considering the narratives of Theophany, it is immediately evident that they deal with miraculous changes in the properties of water under the direct influence of the commands of God Himself or the actions of the great Saints inspired by Him.

Already in the first narrative from the book of Genesis, we hear that when God created the heavens and the earth, “the earth was formless and empty... and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). By His Divine influence on



the waters, He gave them the power to give life, to produce reptiles and fish from themselves.

In the second narrative we hear about the great miracle of the passage of the people of Israel through the Red Sea. At the command of God, the prophet Moses struck the water with his rod, and the water, as if alive and having heard God's command, immediately fulfilled it and dispersed to the right and left, so that the people of Israel could cross the bottom, and it closed its waves over the army of Pharaoh.

A miracle similar to this is described in the fourth narrative, in which we hear that the flow of the Jordan stopped when, under Joshua, the priests with the Ark of the Covenant and all the people crossed over it. Water here, like a rational creature, was obedient to the command of God.

And not only the direct commands of God obeyed the water, which people in vain consider dead. The water definitely felt the holiness of the mantle of the great prophet Elijah, with which he hit it so that it would stop its flow and he and the prophet Elisha could cross the bottom of the Jordan to the other side, as we read in the fifth narrative.

And that the sanctity of Elijah's mantle was great, we know from the fact that, having planted it on his disciple Elisha, he passed on to him, to the highest degree, his gift of miracles and prophecies.

The eleventh narrative tells of the amazing miracle of the burning of the sacrifice of the prophet Elijah in his dispute with the priests of Baal. Fire fell from heaven and burned the sacrifice of the prophet after his fiery prayer and watering the altar and the sacrifice with twelve waterpots of water.

In the third narrative we hear how the bitter water of Marah suddenly became sweet when the prophet Moses, at the command of God, put a piece of wood into it.

In the twelfth narrative we read how the destructive and harmful properties of Jericho's water changed when the blessed salt was poured into it by the prophet Elisha.

In the sixth narrative we read about the sudden healing from the cruel leprosy of Naaman, the commander of the king of Syria, who dipped seven times in the Jordan at the order of the prophet Elisha. Isn't this the enormous power of the prayer of the great righteous man and prophet over the element of water?!

Why did I say so much to you, outlining the narrative readings of the feast of Theophany, about the miraculous changes in the properties of water according to God's commands and through the prayers of the saints? Of course, in order to

answer the difficult question about the purpose of the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ from John in the streams of the Jordan.

In past years, I told you that the great John the Baptist himself was surprised at the desire of the Lamb of God to be baptized by him. He spoke a lot about the deep answer of the Savior to the bewildered question of John: "Let it be so now, for it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

The narratives of the great feast of the Baptism of the Lord lead us to understand another purpose of the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. By his immersion in the waters of the Jordan, He sanctified them and gave them miraculous power to perform the great mystery of baptism.

With three immersion in water, sanctified by deep prayers, the sign of the cross, anointing with consecrated oil, the baptized person is freed from the original sin of Adam and from all his own sins and leaves the font holy and clean.

The consecration of water, performed during the mystery of baptism is not at all the same as during the prayer service for the sanctification of water and even during the great consecration of water on the day of Theophany, but is a very important part of the mystery of baptism. In a deep prayer at the consecration of water, the priest calls on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who consecrated the Jordan water with His Baptism, to consecrate the water of the font for the baptized. With reverent awe let the priest say this prayer and make the great mystery, mentally looking at the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ in the waters of the Jordan.< And we, all Christians, with great reverence and fear, may we lift up our hearts to God on the holy day of Theophany, only once, on the day of the Baptism of the Lord, who tangibly revealed to us the great mystery of His Trinity.

With their own ears, people on the banks of the Jordan heard the voice of God the Father, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). With their own eyes they saw the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the God-man Jesus, standing in the water of the Jordan; they saw the Third Person of the Holy Trinity - the Most Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove descending from heaven on the Lord Jesus.

And it was much easier for people to believe in the Holy Trinity, seeing and hearing It, than to believe only after preaching about It. Let us also accept with deep faith the testimony of these ancient Christians and walk with them along the path shown to us by the God-man Jesus Christ, asking for the grace-filled help of the Holy Spirit on this difficult path. Amen. – Homily on the Sunday After Theophany by St. Luke of Simferopol

\* \* \*

*The always bright skull of Tatiana, brought on a bright crown by the sword.\* On the twelfth Tatiana was beheaded.*

The Holy Virgin Martyr Tatiana was born into an illustrious Roman family, and her father was elected consul three times. He was secretly a Christian and raised his daughter to be devoted to God and the Church. When she reached the age of maturity, Tatiana decided to remain a virgin, betrothing herself to Christ. Disdaining earthly riches, she sought instead the imperishable wealth of Heaven. She was made a deaconess in one of the Roman churches and served God in fasting and prayer, tending the sick and helping the needy.

When Rome was ruled by the sixteen-year-old Alexander Severus (222-235), all power was concentrated in the hands of the regent Ulpian, an evil enemy and persecutor of Christians. Christian blood flowed like water. Tatiana was also arrested, and they brought her into the Temple of Apollo to force her to offer sacrifice to the idol. The Saint began praying, and suddenly there was an earthquake. The idol was smashed into pieces, and part of the temple collapsed and fell down on the pagan priests and many pagans. The demon inhabiting the idol fled screeching from that place. Those present saw its shadow flying through the air.

Then they tore Holy Virgin's eyes out with hooks, but she bravely endured everything, praying for her tormentors that the Lord would open their spiritual eyes. And the Lord heard the prayer of His servant. The executioners saw four angels encircle the Saint and beat her tormentors. A voice was heard from the heavens speaking to the Holy Virgin. Eight men believed in Christ and fell on their knees before Tatiana, begging them to forgive them their sin against her. For confessing themselves Christians they were tortured and executed, receiving Baptism by blood.

The next day Tatiana was brought before the wicked judge. Seeing her completely healed of all her wounds, they stripped her and beat her, and slashed her body with razors. A wondrous fragrance then filled the air. Then she was stretched out on the ground and beaten for so long that the servants had to be replaced several times. The torturers became exhausted and said that an invisible power was beating them with iron rods. Indeed, the angels warded off the blows directed at her and turned them upon the tormentors, causing nine of them to fall dead. They then threw the Saint in prison, where she prayed all night and sang praises to the Lord with the angels.

A new morning began, and they took Tatiana to the tribunal once more. The torturers beheld with astonishment that after such terrible torments she appeared completely healthy and even more radiant and beautiful than before. They began to

urge her to offer sacrifice to the goddess Diana. The Saint seemed agreeable, and they took her to the heathen temple. Tatiana made the sign of the Cross and began to pray. Suddenly, there was a crash of deafening thunder, and lightning struck the idol, the sacrificial offerings and the pagan priests.

Once again, the Martyr was fiercely tortured. She was hung up and scraped with iron claws, and her breasts were cut off. That night, angels appeared to her in prison and healed her wounds as before. On the following day, they took Tatiana to the circus and loosed a hungry lion on her. The beast did not harm the Saint, but meekly licked her feet.

As they were taking the lion back to its cage, it killed one of the torturers. They threw Tatiana into a fire, but the fire did not harm the Martyr. The pagans, thinking that she was a sorceress, cut her hair to take away her magical powers, then locked her up in the Temple of Zeus.

On the third day, pagan priests came to the temple intending to offer sacrifice to Zeus. They beheld the idol on the floor, shattered to pieces, and the holy martyr Tatiana joyously praising the Lord Jesus Christ. The judge then condemned the valiant sufferer to be beheaded with a sword. Her father was also executed with her, because he had raised her to love Christ. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-13 EOB**

Brethren, grace has been granted to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, God says, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." Now, what does "he ascended" mean, if not that he first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the [same] one who also ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. This is until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, having reached the very fullness of Christ.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 4:12-17 EOB**

At that time, when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he came and lived in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, to those who sat in the region and shadow of death to

them light has dawned.' From that time on, Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

*[From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers – Ed.]*

1. Abba Elias said, 'For my part, I fear three things: the moment when my soul will leave my body, and when I shall appear before God, and when the sentence will be given against me.'
2. The old men said of Abba Agathon to Abba Elias, in Egypt, 'He is a good abba.' The old man answered them, 'In comparison with his own generation, he is good.' They said to him, 'And what is he in comparison with the ancients?' He gave them this answer, 'I have said to you that in comparison with his generation he is good but as to that of the ancients, in Scetis I have seen a man who, like Joshua the son of Nun could make the sun stand still in the heavens.' At these words they were astounded and gave glory to God.
3. Abba Elias, the minister, said, 'What can sin do where there is penitence? And of what use is love where there is pride?'
4. Abba Elias said, 'I saw someone who was carrying a skin of wine on his arm, and, in order to make the demons blush, for it was a fantasy, I said to the brother, "Of your charity take off your cloak." He took off his cloak, and was not found to be carrying anything. I say that so that you may not believe even that which you see or hear. Even more, observe your thoughts, and beware of what you have in your heart and your spirit, knowing that the demons put ideas into you so as to corrupt your soul by making it think of that which is not right, in order to turn your spirit from the consideration of your sins and of God.'
5. He also said, 'Men turn their minds either to their sins, or to Jesus, or to men.'
6. He also said, 'If the spirit does not sing with the body, labor is in vain. Whoever loves tribulation will obtain joy and peace later on.'
7. He also said, 'An old man was living in a temple and the demons came to say to him, "Leave this place which belongs to us," and the old man said, "No place belongs to you." Then they began to scatter his palm leaves about, one by one, and the old man went on gathering them together with perseverance. A little later the devil took his hand and pulled him to the door. When the old man reached the door, he seized the lintel with the other hand crying out, "Jesus, save me." Immediately the devil fled away. Then the old man began to weep. Then the Lord said to him, "Why are you weeping?" and the old man said, "Because the devils have dared to seize a man and treat him like this." The Lord said to him, "You had

been careless. As soon as you turned to me again, you see I was beside you." I say this, because it is necessary to take great pains, and anyone who does not do so, cannot come to his God. For he himself was crucified for our sake.'

8. A brother who followed the life of stillness in the monastery of the cave of Abba Savvas came to Abba Elias and said to him, 'Abba, give me a way of life.' The old man said to the brother, 'In the days of our predecessors they took great care about these three virtues: poverty, obedience and fasting. But among monks nowadays avarice, self-confidence and great greed have taken charge. Choose whichever you want most.'

– Abba Elias the Wonderworker

## **Saint Benedict Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth**

By Edgar Charles S. Gibson

Biscop Baducing (this was the name of Benedict before his tonsure) was born in Northumbria in AD 628, of a noble English family. When quite a young man, he stood high in the Royal favour and was rewarded for his services to King Oswiu by the gift of a possession in land suitable to his rank. But, it would seem, to the astonishment of King and courtiers alike, when he was only twenty-five, and had all bright prospects opening out before him, "he lightly esteemed this transitory inheritance in order that he might obtain that which is eternal; he despised the warfare of this World, with its corruptible rewards, that he might be the soldier of the true King, and be thought worthy to possess an everlasting kingdom in the heavenly city. He forsook home, kindred and country for the sake of Christ and his gospel, that he might receive an hundredfold and possess the life which is eternal."

This was in AD 653, just at the time that St. Wilfred (the Elder) had determined to leave his country for his first visit to Rome and, as his close friend, Biscop hailed with joy the opportunity to accompany him. Thus, the two friends started off together; but when Wilfred was detained at Lyons, Biscop hastened onwards without him, "being anxious personally to visit and worship at the places in which were deposited even the bodies of the blessed Apostles, towards whom it had always been his wont to feel an ardent devotion."

After no long time, Biscop returned to his own country, full of fervour and enthusiasm, inspired by all he had heard and seen in his travels, and from this time onward his life was filled with perpetual journeys backwards and forwards between England and Rome; journeys not lightly or idly undertaken, but each with its definite purpose and each taken for the good of the English Church. Twelve years after his first visit, Biscop returned again, accompanied by Prince Alchfrith, and "on this," says Bede, "as on the former occasion, he imbibed the sweets of no

small amount of salutary learning." After a stay of some few months, he started on his homeward journey, but stopped short at Lerins, an island off the south coast of France, where there stood the far-famed monastery of St. Honorat. Here Biscop went through a course of instruction and took upon him the vows of a monastic life. Two years were spent in seclusion and then once more, this time under the name of Benedict, he set out for Rome and paid his third visit to the Papal see.

It was just at this time that Pope Vitalian, in compliance with a request of the two chief English kings, was in the process of sending the great Archbishop Theodore to Britain. Being a Greek however, he was in need of someone who might act as his interpreter and explain to him the customs of the English nation. And who so well suited for this as Benedict, most fortunately just at that time in Rome? Accordingly, the Pope, "observing that the venerable Benedict was a man of a mind fraught with wisdom, perseverance, religion and nobleness, entrusted to his care the bishop whom he had ordained, together with all his party; and enjoined him to abandon the pilgrimage which he had undertaken for Christ's sake, and out of regard to a higher advantage, to return homewards to introduce into England that teacher of the truth whom it had so earnestly sought after; to whom he might become both a guide on the journey, and an interpreter in his teaching after his arrival." Benedict, we are told, did as he was commanded and, together, the two arrived in Kent, where they were most cordially received.

Theodore ascended the throne of the archiepiscopal see, while Benedict, at his request, undertook the government of the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul (St. Augustine's) in the same city. Here Benedict laboured for two years, at the end of which the indefatigable traveller paid a fourth visit to Rome, "with his usual good success," says Bede. England was at that time behind the countries of the continent, both in arts and in literature, and Benedict had probably felt the lack of books from which to teach the scholars whom he gathered around him at Canterbury. He undertook this journey for the purpose of supplying the want he had experienced. Nor was his journey in vain, "he brought back with him no inconsiderable number of books on every branch of sacred literature, which he had either bought at a price or received as presents from his friends." On his return to England he bent his steps northward, being anxious to revisit his own people and the region in which he had been born: and so came to the kingdom of Northumbria. Here, he was well received by King Egfrith, to whom he gave a glowing account of the foreign monasteries and schools of learning and displayed the treasures that he had secured on his journey.

The King caught Benedict's enthusiasm and, in AD 674, gave him a tract of land where he might found a monastery; and here, in a short time, rose the walls of the monastery of St. Peter at Wearmouth, on the left bank of the river from which the



spot takes its name. Benedict must have been a good sailor, for he had to go far and cross the sea before he could find men capable of building a church of stone in the Romanesque style; but nothing daunted, he crossed over to France and brought back with him masons ready and able to do the work he wanted. If a stone church was a rarity in those days, glazed windows were positively unknown in this country; but Benedict was determined that nothing should be wanting to his new church, and so sent messengers again to France. Bede's account of this is curious and interesting. "He sent messengers," he tells us, "to bring over glass-makers (a kind of workman hitherto unknown in Britain) to glaze the windows of the church, and its aisles and chancels. And so it happened that when they came they not only accomplished that particular work which was required of them, but from this time they caused the English nation to understand and learn this kind of handicraft, which was of no inconsiderable utility for the enclosing of the lamps of the church, or for various uses to which vessels are put." Great was the astonishment of the good folk of Northumbria at this innovation introduced first in the church of Monkwearmouth, and shortly afterwards, in Jarrow. So much so that a tradition sprang up, which was handed down for many generations, that, because of its glazed windows, it never was dark in old Jarrow church.

Once the building was finished and Benedict had ransacked the treasures of France to provide "whatever related to the ministry of the altar and the church and holy vessels and vestments." But there were still some things that he wanted, which he could not discover even in France, and so, in AD 679, he set out for a fifth time for Rome. Here he obtained all that he could desire and returned literally laden with spoil. In the first place, says Bede, he imported a numberless collection of all kinds of books; secondly, he introduced some relics of the saints, which were highly esteemed in those days; thirdly, he brought in to his own monastery the order of chanting, singing and ministering in the church, according to the Roman manner - bringing back with him a precentor, John by name, who was to become the future master of his own monastery, and of the English nation; fourthly, he obtained, from the Pope, with the express permission of the King, a grant of certain privileges to his monastery; and lastly, he carried home with him paintings of holy subjects for the ornamentation of the church. There were paintings of the Blessed Virgin and of the Apostles at the east end; along the south side ran a series of figures of the Gospel history, while the north wall was filled with the sublime images of the Visions of St. John the Divine in the Revelation. We are told his reason for thus decorating his church was "to the intent that all who entered the church, even if ignorant of letters, might be able to contemplate, in what direction so ever they looked, the ever gracious countenance of Christ and his saints, even though it were in a representation; or, with a more wakeful mind, might be

reminded of the grace of our Lord's incarnation or, having as it were, the strictness of the last judgment before their eyes, should thereby be cautioned to examine themselves with more narrow scrutiny."

And so his great work was finished, and the monastery which he founded rapidly grew and flourished, so that, in the short space of a year (AD 682), he sent out from it a colony of twenty-two monks, under St. Ceolfrith, and founded a sister monastery of St. Paul at Jarrow, with the hope "that mutual peace and concord, mutual and perpetual affection and kindness should be continued between the two places." Scarcely ten miles apart, the two monasteries were to all intents and purposes but one.

Benedict was now growing old; but his new church at Jarrow was to be no less glorious than that at Wearmouth, and so, in spite of age and infirmities, in AD 685, he crossed the sea once more, and for the sixth and last time repaired to Rome; "returning, as was his custom, enriched with countless gifts for ecclesiastical purposes, with a large supply of sacred volumes and no less an abundance of paintings than on previous occasions. Some of these were scenes from the life of our Lord, which he placed in the old church; while, for the church of Jarrow, he brought back an excellent series of paintings showing the harmony between the Old and the New Testaments. For instance, side by side, the paintings represented such subjects as Isaac bearing the wood on which he was to be slain and our Lord carrying the cross on which he was to suffer; or the serpent raised up by Moses in the wilderness, and the Son of Man exalted upon the cross."

Thus he lived long enough to see both monasteries fairly at work and their buildings completed, and then his work was over. Shortly after his return from Rome, he was seized with a creeping paralysis. For three years, the disease gradually gained upon him, yet he never lost his cheerfulness, nor ceased to praise God and exhort the brethren. He was often troubled by sleepless nights, when, to alleviate his weariness, he would call one of his monks and desire to have read to him the story of the patience of Job, or some other passage of scripture by which a sick man might be comforted, or one bent down by infirmities might be more spiritually raised to heavenly things. Nor did he neglect the regular hours of prayer, but as he was unable to rise from his bed to prayer and could scarcely raise his voice in praise, he would call some of the brethren to him that they might sing the psalms in two choirs, he himself joining with them to the best of his ability. Eventually, the end came. On 12th January AD 690, he died as he had lived, surrounded by the brethren of the monasteries of his own creation, and was buried in the stone church that he had reared at Wearmouth, in the midst of the treasures that he had collected. *(from Johnsandidopoulos.com)*

## Also Commemorated Today

St. [Sava](#) I, first archbishop of Serbia (1235).  
Venerable [Martinian](#) of White Lake, abbot (1483), & Galacteon, his disciple (1506).  
Martyr Mertius of Mauretania (284-305).  
Martyr [Peter](#) Apselamus of Eleutheropolis in Palestine (309).  
Venerable Eupraxia of Tabenna in Egypt (393), wonderworker.  
Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos "[Akathist](#)" and "[The Milk-giver](#)".  
Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos "[Popskaya](#)".  
Virgin Martyr Euthasia.  
Eight Martyrs of Nicaea (Greek).  
St. Elias the Wonderworker, of the Paradise (Greek).  
St. Theodora of Alexandria, instructress of nuns (5th c.).  
Martyr Philotheus of Antioch (ca. 305).  
St. Alan ab Erbin, Confessor in Cornwall (5<sup>th</sup> c. ?)  
38 Martyrs at Iona (750)  
+-Martyr Arcade (Arcadius) of Ceasarea Mauritania (302?) (Gaul)  
+-Saint Césarie (Caesaria), Abbess at Arles, (540) (Gaul)  
+-Saint Victorian of Wipoa, Abbot, (560)  
St. John of Ravenna, bishop (494) (Italy)  
St. Probus, bishop of Verona (c. 59) (Italy)  
St. Salvius (Salve, Suave), bishop of Amiens (c. 625) (Gaul)  
St. Victorian of Asan, monk (c. 560) (Spain)  
Martyrs Zoticus, Rogatus, Modestus, Castulus and companions (unk) (N. Africa)

## Social Team for January 19

Team 3 is up next week – Pani Stacey, Natalya, Victor B. Thank you!

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***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Holy Land, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)