

The Great Blessing of the Waters

*A Composition of Patriarch
Sophronios of Jerusalem.*

CHOIR

Mode pl. 4.

The voice of the Lord upon the waters cries out, saying, 'Come all of you, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, of Christ who has appeared'. (3) [EL]

Today the nature of the waters is made holy, and Jordan is parted and holds back the flow of its waters as it sees the Master washing himself. (2) [EL]

As man, Christ King, you came to the river, and in your goodness you hasten to accept the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner, on account of our sins, O Lover of mankind. (2) [EL]

Glory. Both now. **Mode pl. 4.**

At the voice of the one crying in the desert, 'Prepare the way of the Lord', you came, Lord, having taken the form of a servant, asking for Baptism, though you did not know sin. The waters saw you and were afraid. The Forerunner trembled and cried out, saying, 'How will the lamp enlighten the Light? The servant place his hand on the Master? Saviour, who take away the sin of the world, make me and the waters holy'. [EL]

The Readings

READER

The reading is from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

DEACON

Wisdom. Let us be attentive.

READER

(35:1-10)

Thus says the Lord: Be glad, you thirsty desert, and rejoice exceedingly, and let the desert blossom as a lily. The desert places of the Jordan shall blossom abundantly and rejoice exceedingly. The glory of Lebanon and the honor of Carmel shall be given to it, and My people shall see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of our God. Be strong, you relaxed hands and feeble knees. Be comforted, you fainthearted. Be strong, do not fear. Behold, our God renders judgment and will render it. He will come and save us. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will speak clearly. For water shall burst forth in the desert, and a valley in the thirsty land. The waterless desert shall become meadows, and the thirsty land springs of water. There will be the gladness of birds, a habitation of reeds and marshes. A pure way shall be there, and it shall be called a holy way. No unclean man shall pass through there, neither shall there be an unclean way there. But those dispersed shall walk in it, and they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous animals go up on it, nor at all be found there. But the redeemed shall walk in it, and those gathered by the Lord shall return and come to Zion with gladness, and with everlasting gladness over their head. For praise and exceeding joy will be on their head, and gladness shall possess them. Pain, sorrow, and sighing fled away.

[SAAS]

READER

The reading is from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

DEACON

Wisdom. Let us be attentive.

READER

(55:1-13)

Thus says the Lord: "You who are thirsty, go to the water, and all who have no money, go and buy wine and fat, and eat and drink without money and price. Why do you value at the price of money, and give your toil for what does not satisfy? Listen to Me and eat good things, and your soul will delight in good things. Incline your ears and follow my ways. Listen to Me, and your soul shall live in good things; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the holy and faithful things of David. Behold, I made him a witness among the Gentiles, a ruler and commander to the Gentiles. The Gentiles, which did not know you, shall call upon you, and the peoples who did not understand you shall take refuge in you, because of your God, the Holy One of Israel; for He glorified you." Seek God, and when you find Him, call upon Him when He draws near to you. Let the ungodly man abandon his ways, and the lawless man his counsels; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; for He shall forgive your sins abundantly. "For My counsels are not as your counsels, neither are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "But as heaven is distant from earth, so is My way distant from your ways, and your thoughts from My mind. For as rain comes down, or snow from heaven, and does not return until it saturates the earth, and it brings

forth and produces, and gives seed to the sower and bread for food, so shall My word be, whatever proceeds from My mouth. It shall not return until it accomplishes whatever I willed, and I shall prosper your ways and My commandments. For you shall go forth with gladness and shall be taught with joy, for the mountains and hills shall exult to receive you with joy; and all the trees of the field shall applaud with their branches. Instead of the broom-tree shall come up the cypress, and instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle; and the Lord shall be for a name and for an everlasting sign, and He shall not fail." [SAAS]

READER

The reading is from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

DEACON

Wisdom. Let us be attentive.

READER

(12:3-6)

Thus says the Lord: You will draw water with gladness from the wells of salvation. In that day, you will say, "Praise the Lord; call upon His name. Declare His glorious things among the Gentiles and make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the name of the Lord, for He has done great things. Declare this in all the earth. Exult and be glad, O inhabitants of Zion, for the Holy One of Israel is exalted in her midst." [SAAS]

The Epistle

DEACON

Let us be attentive.

READER

Prokeimenon. Mode 3. Psalm 26.

The Lord is my light and my savior.

Verse: *The Lord is the defender of my life.*

(And with your spirit.)

[SAAS]

DEACON

Wisdom.

READER

The reading is from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians.

DEACON

Let us be attentive.

READER

(10:1-4)

Brethren, I want you to know that our Fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into 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 from the spiritual Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. [RSV]

PRIEST

Peace be with you.

CHOIR

Alleluia. Grave Mode. Psalm 44.

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Verse 1: *My heart overflowed with a good word.* [SAAS]

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Verse 2: *You are more beautiful than the sons of men.* [SAAS]

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

DEACON

Wisdom. Arise. Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

PRIEST

Peace be with all.

DEACON

The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

PRIEST

Let us be attentive.

(Glory to You, O Lord. Glory to You.)

DEACON

(1:9-11)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." [RSV]

PRIEST

Peace be with you.

CHOIR

Glory to You, O Lord. Glory to You.

DEACON

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

(Lord, have mercy.)

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 stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

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

For pious and Orthodox Christians, let us pray to the Lord.

For our Archbishop (Name), for the honorable presbyterate, for the diaconate in

Christ, and for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For our country, for the president, and for all in public service, let us pray to the Lord.

For this city, and for every city and land, and for the faithful who live in them, let us pray to the Lord.

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

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

That this water might be hallowed by the might, and operation, and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That there may descend upon these waters the cleansing operation of the super substantial Trinity; let us pray to the Lord.

That there may be sent down upon it the Grace of Redemption, the blessing of the Jordan; let us pray to the Lord.

That we may be illumined with the Light of Knowledge and Piety through the descent of the Holy Spirit; let us pray to the Lord.

That this water may become the gift of sanctification, redemption from sins, for the healing of soul and body, and for every suitable purpose, let us pray to the Lord.

That it may become water welling up to eternal life; let us pray to the Lord.

That this water may prove effectual for the averting of every plot of visible and invisible enemies; let us pray to the Lord.

For those who are sprinkled with it and take it for the blessing of homes; let us pray to the Lord.

That it may be for the purification of soul and body to all who with faith take and drink of it; let us pray to the Lord.

That we may be granted to be filled with sanctification through drinking this water, by the invisible manifestation of the Holy Spirit; let us pray to the Lord.

That the Lord God may listen to the voice of the prayer of us sinners and have mercy on 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 protect us, O God, by Your grace.

Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed, and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

(To You, O Lord.)

The Priest reads the following prayer in a low voice.

Lord Jesus Christ, only-begotten Son, who are in the bosom of the Father, true God, source of life and immortality, Light from Light, who came into the world to enlighten it, flood our mind with light by your Holy Spirit and accept us as we bring you praise and thanksgiving for your wondrous mighty works from every age, and for your saving dispensation in these last times. By it you clothe yourself in our weak and beggared matter and coming down to the measure of our servitude, King of all, you accepted also to be baptised in the Jordan by the hand of a servant, so that, having sanctified the nature of the waters, you, the sinless one, might make a way for our rebirth through water

and Spirit and re-establish us in our original freedom. As we celebrate the memory of this divine Mystery, we entreat you, Master, lover of mankind: Sprinkle on us, your unworthy servants, cleansing water, in accordance with your divine promise, the gift of your compassion, that the request of us sinners over this water may become acceptable by your goodness and that through it your blessing to be granted to us and to all your faithful people, to the glory of your holy, venerated Name. For to you belong all glory, honour and worship, with your Father who is without beginning, with you all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen. [EL]

And having said the Amen to himself, when the Deacon has finished the Litany, the Priest begins this Prayer in a loud voice:

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Sophronios of Jerusalem.**

PRIEST

Trinity beyond all being, beyond all goodness, beyond all godhead, all-powerful, all-vigilant, invisible, incomprehensible; Creator of the spiritual beings and rational natures, innate goodness, unapproachable Light that enlightens everyone coming into the world, shine also in me your unworthy servant. Enlighten the eyes of my mind that I may dare to sing the praise of your measureless benevolence and power. May my supplication for the people here present be acceptable, so that my offences may not prevent the Holy Spirit from being present here; but permit me now without condemnation to cry out to you and say, Master, lover of mankind, beyond

all goodness, Almighty, eternal King. We glorify you, the Creator and Fashioner of the universe. We glorify you, only-begotten Son of God, without father from your Mother, without mother from your Father. For in the preceding feast we saw you as a babe, but in the present one we see you full and perfect man, our God, made manifest as perfect God from perfect God. For today the moment of the feast is here for us and the choir of saints assembles here with us, and Angels keep festival with mortals. Today the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove dwelt upon the waters. Today the Sun that never sets has dawned and the world is made radiant with the light of the Lord. Today the Moon with its radiant beams sheds light on the world. Today the stars formed of light make the inhabited world lovely with the brightness of their splendour. Today the clouds rain down from heaven the shower of justice for mankind. Today the Uncreated by his own will accepts the laying on of hands by his own creature. Today the Prophet and Forerunner draws near, but stands by with fear seeing God's condescension towards us. Today the streams of Jordan are changed into healing by the presence of the Lord. Today all creation is watered by mystical streams. Today the failings of mankind are being washed away by the waters of Jordan. Today Paradise is opened for mortals and the Sun of justice shines down on us. Today the bitter water as once for Moses' people is changed to sweetness by the presence of the Lord. Today we have been delivered from the ancient grief, and saved as the new Israel. Today we have been redeemed from darkness

and are filled with radiance by the light of the knowledge of God. Today the gloomy fog of the world is cleansed by the manifestation of our God. Today all creation shines with light from on high. Today error has been destroyed and the coming of the Master makes for us a way of salvation. Today things on high keep festival with those below, and those below commune with those on high. Today the sacred and triumphant festal assembly of the Orthodox exults. Today the Master hastens towards baptism, that he may lead humanity to the heights. Today the One who does not bow bows down to his own servant, that he may free us from servitude. Today we have purchased the Kingdom of heaven, for the Kingdom of the Lord will have no end. Today earth and sea share the joy of the world, and the world has been filled with gladness. The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and were afraid. The Jordan turned back when it saw the fire of the godhead descending in bodily form and entering it. The Jordan turned back as it contemplated the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, descending and flying about you. The Jordan turned back as it saw the Invisible made visible, the Creator made flesh, the Master in the form of a servant. The Jordan turned back and the mountains leapt as they saw God in the flesh, and the clouds uttered their voice, marvelling at what had come to pass, seeing Light from Light, true God from true God, the Master's festival today in Jordan; seeing him drowning the death from disobedience, the goad of error and the bond of Hell in Jordan and granting the Baptism of salvation to the world. Therefore I too, a sinner and your unworthy servant, recount

the greatness of your wonders and, seized with fear, in compunction cry out to you: ^[EL]

After completing this, he says in a more powerful voice,

Great are you, O Lord, and wonderful your works, and no word is adequate to sing the praise of your wonders. (3) ^[EL]

(Glory to You, O Lord. Glory to You..)

For by your own will you brought the universe from non-existence into being, you hold creation together by your might, and by your providence you direct the world. You composed creation from four elements; with four seasons you crowned the circle of the year. All the spiritual Powers tremble before you. The sun sings your praise, the moon glorifies you, the stars entreat you, the light obeys you, the deeps tremble before you, the springs are your servants. You stretched out the heavens on the waters; you walled in the sea with sand; you poured out the air for breathing. Angelic Powers minister to you. The choirs of the Archangels worship you. The many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim as they stand and fly around you hide their faces in fear of your unapproachable glory. For you, being God uncircumscribed, without beginning and inexpressible, came upon earth, taking the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of mortals. For you could not bear, Master, in the compassion of your mercy to watch the human race being tyrannised by the devil, but you came and saved us. We acknowledge your grace, we proclaim your mercy, we do not conceal your benevolence. You freed the generations of our race. You sanctified a virgin womb by your birth. All creation sang your praise when you

appeared. For you are our God who appeared on earth and lived among mortals. You sanctified the streams of Jordan by sending down from heaven your All-holy Spirit and you smashed the heads of the dragons that lurked there. [EL]

Therefore, O King, lover of mankind, be present now too through the visitation of your Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. (3) [EL]

(Amen.)

And give to it the grace of redemption and the blessing of Jordan. Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a deliverance from sins, an averting of diseases, unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic strength. That all who draw from it and partake of it may have it for cleansing of souls and bodies, for healing of passions, for sanctification of homes, for every suitable purpose. For you are our God, who through water and Spirit renewed our nature made old by sin. You are our God, who in the days of Noë drowned sin through the water of the flood. You are our God, who through Moses freed the Hebrew race from the slavery of Pharaoh through the sea. You are our God who split open the rock in the desert, and waters rushed out and torrents flooded down, and you satisfied your thirsty people. You are our God, who through Elias turned Israel from the error of Baal. [EL]

And now, Master, do you yourself sanctify this water by your Holy Spirit. (3) [EL]

(Amen.)

Give to all who partake of it sanctification, blessing, cleansing, health. [EL]

And save, Lord, our faithful Rulers. (3) [EL]

And guard them under your protection in peace. Subdue beneath their feet every foe and enemy. Grant them all their requests that are for salvation and eternal life. Remember, Lord, our Archbishop N., the whole order of Presbyters, the Diaconate in Christ, every rank of the clergy, the people here present and our brethren who with good reason are absent, and have mercy on us in accordance with your great mercy. So that through elements and through Angels and through mortals and through things visible and through things unseen, your all-holy name may be glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages. [EL]

(Amen.)

Peace be with all.

(And with your spirit.)

Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

(To You, O Lord.)

And the Priest says the Prayer in a low voice.

Incline your ear and hear us, Lord, who accepted to be baptised in Jordan and to sanctify the waters, and bless us all, who signify our calling as servants by the bending of our necks. And count us worthy to be filled with your sanctification through the partaking and sprinkling of this water. And let it be for us, Lord, for healing of soul and body. [EL]

Aloud

For you are the sanctification of our souls and bodies, and to you we give glory, thanksgiving and worship, with your Father who is without beginning, and your All-holy,

good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever,
and to the ages of ages. ^[EL]

(Amen.)

And the Priest immediately, blessing the waters in the figure of the Cross, immerses the precious Cross, plunging it upright into the water and lifting it out again, chanting the following Troparion. The Priest once and the Choirs once each.

PRIEST

Apolytikion. Mode 1.

As You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, then the worship of the Trinity became manifest, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, naming You the Beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You. ^[SD]

CHOIR

As You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, then the worship of the Trinity became manifest, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, naming You the Beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You. (2)

And he sprinkles all the People with the water.

On January 5.

Kontakion. For the Forefeast.

Mode 4. You appeared today.

To the flowing streams today * of River Jordan * comes the Lord and cries aloud * to John the Baptist, and He says, * "Be not afraid to baptize me now; * for I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man." ^[SD]

On January 6.

Kontakion. For the Feast.

Mode 4. Automelon.

You appeared today to us * on earth, O Master, * and Your light was signed on us * who cry aloud to You and say * with understanding, O Christ our God: You came and shone forth, O Light unapproachable. ^[SD]

As we enter the Church we chant the following Idiomelon.

CHOIR

Mode pl. 2.

Let us the faithful extol the greatness of God's benevolent deeds concerning us. For He became man in our transgression; and now in the Jordan, He who alone is clean and undefiled is cleansed in the cleansing that is meant for us; and He sanctifies me and the waters, and on the water He crushes the heads of the dragons. Therefore, brethren, let us draw water with gladness. For to those who draw with faith, the grace of the Spirit is invisibly given by Christ, our God and the Savior of our souls. ^[SD]

Then the dismissal and the distribution of the Antidoron.

PRIEST

May He who condescended to be baptized by John in the Jordan, for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-pure and all-immaculate holy Mother, the power of the precious and life-giving Cross, the protection of the honorable, bodiless powers of heaven, the supplications of the honorable, glorious prophet and forerunner John the Baptist, of the holy, glorious, and praiseworthy apostles, of the holy, glorious, and triumphant martyrs, of our righteous and God-bearing fathers, (local patron saint);

of the holy and righteous ancestors of God
Joachim and Anna, and of all the saints, have
mercy on us and save us, for He is good and
loves mankind.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers,
Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us
[and save us].

(Amen.)