FATHER VASYL'S MESSAGE FOR THEOPHANY - JANUARY 2023

"I need to be baptized by You, and You are coming to me?" Thus, humbly bowing before Jesus, John the Baptist tries to save himself from this honor. He hears in response, "Permit it to be so now, because it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus goes to teach His disciples, to forgive and to heal people, but first He accepts the sign of repentance Himself even though He is without sin.

How often in our lives we do the opposite! We prefer to teach others, criticize their mistakes, and point out flaws to everyone around us. How rarely do we ourselves set an example of the observance of the precepts, the violation of which so infuriates us, or the observance of the law to which we exhort others!

Jesus begins His journey by establishing baptism which is the Holy Mystery or Sacrament through which all of us came into His church. This Holy Mystery or Sacrament, which along with repentance or reconciliation, washes away previously committed sins and becomes a symbol of union with God. And now, accepting baptism, it is as if we all enter together with Jesus into the Jordan River, and we leave it spiritually cleansed. The water we immerse ourselves in or have poured on our heads during baptism is only an external sign of the Holy Mystery or Sacrament. At the same time, we ourselves or godparents on our behalf, made vows before God at baptism. We renounced the devil and promised to serve God, promised to walk with Christ in the future, and to carry a clean conscience washed with water throughout our lives. Were we able to keep our word? Unfortunately, not always. In His mercy, the Lord gives us a chance to return to the Jordan and to spiritually experience the touch of its cleansing waters again and the Holy Mystery of Reconciliation or Repentance.

Each repentance can become a new baptism for us, only without the cleansing holy water. It can remove from us the burden that we have acquired during our life with the water of our tears, the power of our experiences and the gracious presence of the Lord baptized in the Jordan.

Today, the Savior reveals Himself to the world. He goes out for public service, and the Most Holy Trinity appears above the Jordan. The voice of God the Father testifies that Jesus is the Only Begotten Son. This mystical unity of the Holy Trinity appears to the world after Christ sets an example of humility and an example of purification from sins and falls. Christ wants us to be His followers, brothers and sisters, and take an active part in the life of His church. Amen.