

DEARLY BELOVED

THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY, OF OUR LORD JESUS' BAPTISM, IS ALSO CALLED THE "FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS." WE CONTINUE THIS FEAST WITH THIS SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY WHEREIN WE SHALL BLESS WATER AS A REMEMBRANCE OF HOW CHRIST JESUS SANCTIFIED WATER BY BEING BAPTIZED IN THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN RIVER. THIS IS A FEAST OF LIGHT BECAUSE OUR LORD IS HIMSELF THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. HIS BAPTISM IS THE REVELATION TO THE WORLD OF HIM WHO IS THE SON OF GOD IN THE FLESH, THE ETERNAL FATHER WHOSE VOICE SOUNDS FROM THE HEAVENS, AND THE ALL-HOLY SPIRIT WHO DESCENDS IN THE LIKENESS OF A DOVE.

THE GOSPEL TODAY TELLS US "UPON THOSE WHO SAT IN THE REGION AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, A GREAT LIGHT HAS DAWNED." OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS PROPHECY OF ISAIAH. HE IS THE GREAT LIGHT WHO HAS DAWNED UPON THE ENTIRE WORLD. SAINT PAUL SAYS, "HE WHO DESCENDED IS THE SAME ONE WHO ASCENDED." THE SON OF GOD WHO ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN IS THE SAME SON OF GOD, THE TRUE LIGHT, WHO DESCENDED TO US, BECOMING MAN AND REVEALING HIMSELF

TO US. THE LIGHT CAME DOWN TO US, TO DWELL AMONG US, TO LEAD US TO ALL TRUTH AND HOLINESS. AND AS WE READ IN SAINT JOHN'S GOSPEL, "HE IS THE TRUE LIGHT WHICH ENLIGHTENS EVERYONE COMING INTO THE WORLD."

(JOHN 1:9)

WE HAVE RECEIVED THE SAVING LIGHT WHO IS JESUS CHRIST AT OUR OWN BAPTISM. IT WAS THERE THAT WE FACED THE WEST, WHERE DARKNESS BEGINS AS THE SUN SETS, TO RENOUNCE THE DEVIL AND ALL HIS WORKS. WE MAKE A CONSCIOUS AND DELIBERATE CHOICE TO RENOUNCE THE DARKNESS OF THE DEVIL AND TO RENOUNCE THE WORKS OF DARKNESS WHICH IS SIN. THEN WE ARE TURNED TO FACE THE EAST FROM WHENCE THE SUN ARISES, WE TURN TO FACE THE HOLY ALTAR, TO FACE THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE TRUE LIGHT WHO IS CHRIST.

AFTER HIS BAPTISM OUR LORD JESUS PREACHED "REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND." THESE WORDS RING TRUE FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF HEART AND MIND THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN IN ONE INSTANT. IT DOESN'T TAKE PLACE AT THAT ONE MOMENT OF BAPTISM NEVER TO BE HEARD FROM AGAIN.

REPENTANCE IS A WAY OF LIFE, A LIFE THAT IS DAILY TURNING AWAY FROM SIN AND FOLLOWING CHRIST MORE CLOSELY. WE HAVE CHOSEN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST AT BAPTISM. NOW WE MUST CONTINUE TO CHOOSE HIM EVERY DAY. AS HE HIMSELF TELLS US, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. HE WHO FOLLOWS ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE." (JOHN 8:12) SO OUR LIVES ARE FILLED WITH CHOICES, CHOOSING LIGHT OVER DARKNESS. WHEN WE CHOOSE THE LIGHT, CHOOSE TO DO THE WORKS OF GOD IN THIS WORLD, THEN WE WILL FIND THAT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NOT A PLACE IN SPACE AND TIME. "IT IS A DISPOSITION." OUR LORD TELLS US "THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU." (LUKE 17:21) IT IS THE REALIZATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD AT WORK HERE AND NOW WITHIN US AND IN THE WORLD.

AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD ENTERED GALILEE TO CALL HIS FIRST DISCIPLES, SO HAS HE CALLED US. CHRIST JESUS CALL US TO BE LIGHTS FROM HIS LIGHT, TO REFLECT HIM TO THE WORLD, TO PERSEVERE IN THE WORKS OF LIGHT: ALL VIRTUE AND LOVE AND COMPASSION THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM MORE DEEPLY AND THAT THE WORLD, THROUGH US, MAY KNOW THE GLORY

OF THE FATHER WHO IS HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON MADE FLESH FOR US BY THE
POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TO WHOM IS DUE ALL GLORY, HONOR AND
ADORATION UNTO AGES OF AGES. AMEN.