

Homily on the Sunday after Theophany January 20, 2008

First on St. John, then continue a lesson we began yesterday on Baptism

- John the Forerunner: son of High Priest Zachariah and Elizabeth (she being the cousin of Mary)
 - Father's prophecy: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (St. Luke 1: 76-79)
 - Isaiah's Prophecy: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 40:3-5)
 - Cousin of Jesus Christ – recognized Him even in the womb: "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (St. Luke 1: 41-43)
 - John had grown up in the wilderness. Then began his prophetic ministry.
 - His authority came from God – people listened to him because of his asceticism and his traditional message (Andrew was his disciple)
 - He offered the Baptism of Repentance. Cleansing of sins
 - But his real ministry was as the forerunner of Christ
 - John baptized with water, but Christ with the Spirit
 - John baptized for repentance, Christ for perfection
 - (Yesterday, we compared the Old/New Testament Baptisms)
 - Today, briefly describe three more historical baptisms, all in Christ for the renewal and perfection
- St. Volodymyr in 988
 - Dedicated himself to Christ, and brought his people with him
- Your own Baptism
 - Most of you: directly connected to [988] – it is a legacy and inheritance. Your parents' passed it to you for your perfection.
- The Baptisms that follow here (those to come)
 - **Looking back to 988**, the greatness is not just what is depicted on our wall
 - But what happened next. The people in the river dedicated their lives to Christ and His Orthodox Church. They drew the next generation into it (through Baptism).
 - Spread the faith until all of Ukraine was Orthodox Christian.
 - Then they defended and preserved that faith in difficult times (reading Prof. Trokhim)
 - Lithuanians, Poles, Russia, Communism, poverty in this land
- So what will we do? It is hard to be a Christian. Even harder to spread the faith
 - To our own children, much less our neighbors!
 - But this is what our ancestors did in even more difficult times.
- What will we do? What will be our inheritance to our families, this community, this land, to those that follow us?
- Through Christ and the prayers of those that have gone before us, we will do no less!