

THE MESSENGER

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church
JANUARY 2014



The Theophany of our Lord — January 6

MARK THE DATES

January 1: Circumcision of our Lord; Civil New Year, Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM

January 5: Vespers and Great Blessing of Water following Sunday Liturgy

January 6: THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

GREAT BLESSING OF WATER FOLLOWING LITURGY

BLESSING OF LAKE MEAD, 1:00 PM

January 7: Synaxis of St. John the Baptist (OS Christmas), Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

January 8: Adult Class Resumes, Daily Vespers and Class, 6:30 PM

January 11: Slavonic Moleben, Russian Christmas Yolka, 10:00 AM

January 18: First Annual St. Paul's Chili Cookoff follows Vespers

January 19: Installation of 2014 Parish Council

January 25: FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM

January 28-February 7: Father John out of town; Metropolitan Council Meeting

Send email addresses and corrections to: frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

January 2014

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p>GREETERS</p> <p>JANUARY 5: CAMPBELL/MASON JANUARY 12: OSBURN/CONDUCTOR JANUARY 19: MURPHY/JOHNSON JANUARY 26: MCAULEY/BRITTON</p>		<p>1</p> <p>CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</p>	<p>2</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p><i>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</i> <i>CONFESSIONS</i></p>	
<p>5</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: YOUTH EPISTLE: YOUTH POST-COMM: VESPERS/BLESSING OF WATER</p>	<p>6</p> <p>THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM BLESSING OF WATER BLESSING OF LAKE MEAD, 1:00 PM HOUSE BLESSINGS BEGIN</p>	<p>7</p> <p>SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN (OLD STYLE CHRISTMAS) DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM</p>	<p>8</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>9</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>MOLEBEN, RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS CHILDREN'S PARTY, 10 AM <i>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</i> <i>CONFESSIONS</i></p>
<p>12</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: HOOD EPISTLE: DEMKO POST-COMM: PARKER CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>WOMEN'S READING GROUP, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>15</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>16</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>BAPTISM, 11:00 AM <i>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</i> <i>CONFESSIONS</i> GREAT CHILI COOKOFF</p>
<p>19</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: BROOKS EPISTLE: SAS POST-COMM: BROPHY CHURCH SCHOOL INSTALLATION OF PARISH COUNCIL</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>WOMEN'S READING GROUP, 10:00 AM PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM</p>	<p>22</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>23</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>24</p> <p>BAPTISM, 1:00 PM</p>	<p>25</p> <p>FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM <i>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</i> <i>CONFESSIONS</i> CHOIR REHEARSAL</p>
<p>26</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: BOWMAN EPISTLE: HOOD POST-COMM: DEMKO CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>WOMEN'S READING GROUP, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>29</p> <p>FATHER JOHN OUT OF TOWN, JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 7 METROPOLITAN COUNCIL MEETING AND PERSONAL</p>	<p>30</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>FEB 1</p> <p><i>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</i> NO CONFESSIONS</p>



The Messenger

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5400 Annie Oakley Drive • Las Vegas, Nevada 89120
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JANUARY 2014

Annual Report of the Rector

Archpriest John J. Dresko
Annual Report to the Parish
December 8, 2013

METRICAL RECORDS 2013 (since last annual meeting)

Baptisms 16
Chrismations 0
Weddings 5
Burials 1

THANKS

As always, there is a treasure trove of thanks to be offered to everyone who helps out to make the parish tick. Naming people is risky because one might forget a name or two. God knows who every single person is and what gifts they have offered to His glory! Over the past year, we have been blessed to see so many new people step into leadership roles and breath new life into our parish. Without multitudes of people offering time, talent, and yes, treasure, the day-to-day life at St. Paul's would be meager indeed. I do especially want to thank my wife for her continued support and hard work for both the parish and me. She did not expect to

be directing our parish choir, but when Juliana and Brian suddenly moved, my wife took a deep breath and did what was needed. She picked up her mantle. I speak for the choir, our whole parish, and myself when I say "we would be up a creek without a paddle without you!" Thank you!

2013 in Review

Anniversary

This past year, we have been celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of our parish. The highlight of the year was, of course, the visit of His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, in May for the "official" celebration weekend. We had a wonderful Wine and Cheese Reception following Vespers that was elegant and joyful. The hierarchical liturgy was glorious and especially joyful with the ordination of our parish son, Anthony Pluta, to the subdiaconate. The banquet following the liturgy was a great time of celebration and fellowship. We remember all of our founders, especially those who have gone to their eternal rest, with thanks and gratitude for handing down

to us this pearl of our parish.

Fellowship

In assessing our parish life, which is quite busy, we came to the conclusion that in all the "busy-ness," we lost sight of making time for us all to just be together and enjoy each other's company. So in August, we began a Fellowship Committee to begin planning events just to bring us together. If the events planned happen to raise modest funds for the parish, that is a side benefit. The purpose is to plan fellowship. We had our first Oktoberfest in November, we have our Christmas Cookie Walk next Saturday, a Chili Cookoff is planned for January 18, and a Wine Tasting Event will be planned after Pascha in the spring. We hope and pray that all of these events will help to bring us closer as a parish family. Any ideas for other gatherings would be most appreciated.

Education

The Church School/Youth report gives detail about our children and their activities. But we have adult-based activities also. We

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ATTACHED

Archpriest John Bruchok

CHOIR DIRECTOR

Matushka Elizabeth Dresko

PARISH COUNCIL

Virginia Hood, Vice-President

Karen Short, Treasurer

Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

James Bowman

James Brophy

Alan Buttell

Kevin McAuley

Litsa Osburn

Joseph Wheeler

SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds

Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach

Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach

Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth

Amy McAuley

Christina Sas

Fellowship Committee

have a regular (although more sporadic than I would like this year) adult discussion group that meets on Wednesday evenings. We begin with Daily Vespers then have a one-hour discussion on the Faith. We are talking about Orthodox Spirituality and Contemporary Issues. A new addition to our education lineup is a "Women's Reading Group," which meets on Tuesday mornings and discusses a chosen book. In addition, we have a regular "Coffee Chat" session on Thursday mornings, which is an unstructured gathering at the Badger Café, that chats about whatever is brought up. Finally, the Orthodox Clergy Association of the valley plans an annual retreat during Great Lent, and if possible, Advent. This year's program is to be determined. I encourage everyone to join us for any of these groups.

National and Diocesan Duties

By personal choice, after almost twenty years of service at virtually every level of Church life, I refused appointment or election to any service outside St. Paul's except direct service to the diocese and His Eminence for five years. I was tired and had my own healing to do before entering the fray again. However, with my knowledge and acceptance, this past year His Eminence appointed me to the Finance Committee of our diocese, then the Metropolitan Council of the OCA. I was subsequently elected to a three-year term. I have also been tasked to take leadership on some confidential clergy matters. In addition, His Eminence encouraged me, within reason, to accept speaking invitations from

selected parishes within and outside our diocese. I highlight these duties only to keep you informed and to let you know that I know they have an effect on our parish life. Our adult class has been hit and miss and it seemed for a while like I was going somewhere every couple of weeks. I can only thank you as my parish family for having a broad, non-parochial view of Church life and for having the willingness to share my attention and talents with others. I make every effort to limit the difficulties that might arise here from my other duties.

Finances

You can see from our financial report distributed with the report packet for this meeting that this year has been difficult for us financially. We are, as of this date, \$12,000 behind in our budget needs for this year. Some of the reasons are easily understandable — we have lost a couple of major donor families this year. Some are not — some of the pledges made for this year have not been kept. I assume and pray that circumstances have prevented fulfillment of those pledges. In any event, our Treasurer, Karen Short, does a remarkable job and we have managed to stay current on all our obligations except our diocesan and OCA assessments. Those are still obligations that we must meet, so we are going to begin the new year in debt unless we have an exceptional December. Please make every effort to be generous to the needs of the parish. Our budgeted expenses over the past three years have not changed in the least. I have not had a salary increase in four

years and except for the small increase in the pension plan requirements, the budget for “me” has not changed one penny in three years.

Parish Council

We are, in 2014, beginning a transition on our parish council duties. We are recommending that the position of Treasurer be split into two positions — Treasurer and Financial Secretary. The Treasurer will be responsible for the reception, counting and depositing of funds. The Financial Secretary will maintain the financial books and accounts, pay bills and account for the distribution of parish funds. Currently, Karen Short does both jobs. We are proposing Joseph Wheeler for election to the parish council today. He has begun to “apprentice” under Karen to assume the position of Treasurer, with Karen remaining Financial Secretary. Should everything go as well as we anticipate, we will propose an official change to our By-Laws at next year’s annual meeting to make the change permanent.

You will notice that the proposed slate of candidates does not, for the first time in a long time, include a very familiar name. Laura Draskovic has served St. Paul’s in a number of capacities, always having the best intentions and efforts for the parish. She has been struggling with her health this past year and I had to have the very difficult conversation with her that it was now time for her to retire from all her duties and pass the baton, so to speak, to others who will try to carry it as well as she did. I know that every fiber of her

being wanted to tell me no. But, once again, she did what was best for the parish and accepted my request. I not only thank Laura for her work and efforts over the past many years, but also for her willingness to do anything for the parish and me. She literally never said no to anything I ever asked her to do — even the last, most difficult thing. For that, I will be eternally grateful and our parish should also be thankful. Many Years to the servant of God, Laura!

We are proposing Ginny Hood for election to the office of Vice President. She probably doesn’t realize it, but she has been preparing for this the past year. She manages much of the day-to-day life of the parish when I am away and does it with grace and exceptional competence. She loves Jesus Christ, the Church and our parish and will do a wonderful job.

Moving Forward

I said at the banquet for our 25th anniversary these words: “We are now ready to begin the next 25 years in St. Paul’s history. I have no idea what will be written in that history. But we begin it tomorrow. As long as God and the bishop want us to be here, my wife and I are ready to help write that history. May God bless us with the wisdom, strength and health to stand at the head of our parish family as we begin that future. And may God bless each of you with the mature faith necessary for all of us to stand together and witness to the whole world the glory of the risen Lord and His Church.”

The spirit in our parish is

very good. We are a family. And that is as it should be, and that is the measure of our adulthood. I hope and pray that 2014 will be a year of prosperity, love, fellowship, friendship and worship at St. Paul’s. We will do everything in our power to make it so — may God bless our efforts.

Finally, in the past year, there are many times when I have fallen short as a father, pastor, preacher, and priest. For this and any possible offense I may have committed against any one of you, I beg your forgiveness. May God continue to bless St. Paul Parish with His goodness and light. May the Lord bless you from Zion and may each of you see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

FEASTDAYS

In January, we celebrate the following feastsdays. Please join us!

THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

January 6

VESPERS WITH BLESSING OF WATER FOLLOWING LITURGY (SUN)
DIVINE LITURGY WITH BLESSING OF WATER, 8:00 AM (MON)

BLESSING LAKE MEAD, 1 PM

*Synaxis of St. John the Baptist
(Old Calendar Christmas)*

January 7

DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (TUES)

FAST FREE PERIOD

The days following the Nativity of the Lord (December 25) until January 4 are **fast-free** days in the Orthodox Church. The Eve of Theophany (January 5) is a **fast** day.

TRAVELS

Fr. John will be away to attend the Metropolitan Council meeting in New York and some added personal time off from **January 28-February 7**. If you need a priest when Father is away, please call Ginny Hood (526-4428) and she will coordinate an appropriate local response. Father Aurel Sas will be serving for Fr. John the weekend of February 1-2. Please welcome him warmly!

HOUSE BLESSINGS

Father John will begin the annual schedule of house blessings following the liturgy of the Feast of Theophany on January 6. A sign-up list is available in the vestibule of the church for those who wish to request a visit. Please sign up and Father will determine a schedule and contact each family with a date and time.

SLAVONIC SERVICE

Father Alexander will be here on January 11. Instead of the usual Slavonic Liturgy, a Moleben will be served followed by a Yolka for the young people.

CHILI COOKOFF

Mark your calendars! Our first annual St. Paul's Great Chili Cookoff will be held after Vespers on Saturday, January 18, 2014. More details will be forthcoming, but Chef Extraordinaire Father John Bruchok will welcome all challengers as pots and spoons cross swords in our church hall and kitchen!

INSTALLATION OF COUNCIL

Our 2014 Parish Council as elected at the annual meeting has been approved by His Eminence and will be installed on Sunday,

January 19, at the end of liturgy. All council members are expected to be present. Our 2014 Council:
Virginia Hood, *Vice President*
Karen Short, *Treasurer*
Cathy Wilkalis, *Secretary*
Joseph Bowman
James Brophy
Alan Buttell
Kevin McAuley
Litsa Osburn
Joseph Wheeler

FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project date is **Saturday, January 25th**. We gather at 10:30 AM to prepare bag lunches then go down to distribute them to the needy. Join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

CHOIR REHEARSAL

The monthly rehearsal for the choir will take place after Vespers on Saturday, January 25, 2014. All choir members are asked to make every effort to attend.

2014 BENEFIT DINNER

Our annual Benefit Dinner (not held in 2013 because of the 25th anniversary celebration), will be scheduled for February 23, 2014 at the Sunset Gardens. Tickets will be \$100. Dinner, dancing and a silent auction will benefit the Capital Fund of the parish. Start planning to attend now, and if you have possible silent auction items, please see Pam Campbell or Eve Kaganovitch. Please use the attached flyer to invite others.

COFFEE CHAT

We meet on Thursdays, at 10:00 AM. We have gone back to our usual Badger Cafe at the corner

of Tropicana and Spencer.

READING GROUP

The Women's Reading Group continues in the church library on Tuesdays from 10:00-11:30 AM. The book is *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica*. Please contact Christine Johnson at 651-233-3551 (voice or text). The book is being read together with discussion.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

We have received a bid on the repair, resealing and re-striping of our parking lot. We anticipated a bid of \$20K. **The bid came in at \$7,800.** We can commence with this project as soon as donations come in.

We have established a goal of **\$60,000** to fund needed projects. We ask everyone to consider a special donation to this fund, above and beyond your normal contributions for the support of the parish.

CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. *Special needs at this time: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken.* Thank you!

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer: *Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts — time, talent and treasure — which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and*

multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

• **Baptisms.** A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.

• **Matrimony.** A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.

• **Memorials (Panikhida).** Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS

DECEMBER 17, 2013 MEETING

Rector's Report:

Father John thanked the parish council for all they have done throughout the year. He especially wanted to thank Laura Drascovic (Vice President) and Pam Campbell for their service as they leave the council. Archbishop Benjamin has approved the new council. The installation will take place on Sunday, January 19, 2014 and the next Parish Council Meeting will take place on January 21, 2014.

One of the new duties for the council will be to read the Sexual Misconduct Policies set out by

the OCA. Father John will e-mail each council member and upon reading each member will sign that they have read the document. Archbishop Benjamin is now requiring that an individual must be with the parish for 6 months before being permitted to work in children's ministry.

Lake Havasu: St. Peter's Orthodox mission has closed. Father Peter has transferred to a church in Old Forge PA.

Vice President: no report.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short reported that we owe \$12,000.00 in back assessments. We are current on all other bills.

Capital Fund: \$3,710.00

Rainy Day: \$4,500.00

Icon Fund: \$7,500.00

Income for November was \$15,551.98, with expenses of \$17,445.55 for a deficit of **\$1,893.57.**

YTD 2013

2013 YTD Inc \$ 183,661.20

2013 YTD Exp \$ 197,864.54

Exp over Inc \$ **14,203.34**

Buildings and Grounds:

Pigeons: Kevin cleaned the bell and tower. We are still looking for effective ways to eliminate the problem. The bell rope needs repair.

Cathy Wilkalis brought up the disheveled look of the sign out front and that the cross on the shrine needs to be tightened. These items will be addressed as soon as possible.

Church School/Youth: No report.

Charity: The Feeding of the Homeless next date is January 25, 2014.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: No report.

Fellowship:

Cookie Walk: We made \$660.00. Tanya suggested a vinyl banner be placed on the fence next year. Karen Short asked that \$200 be allocated to her now for the sign from the profits. Parish council unanimously agreed. Pam Campbell also suggested asking Tomiyasu Elementary to hand out fliers as this represents the surrounding neighborhood.

Chili Cookoff: Will take place on Saturday, January 18th after vespers. The committee will meet to set up the preliminaries.

Outreach/Website: no report.

Russian: no report.

Stewardship: we currently have 37 pledges. Last year we had 43. The average pledge is \$4000.00. People are being very serious about their pledges and giving them great thought.

OLD BUSINESS

Bell Tower: no report.

Mission Request: Father Damian Kuolt is working with an OCA mission in Bakersfield, Ca. and has asked if the mission could have the candelabras. Father John gave the okay and the candelabras will be picked up in the next few weeks. Father John also gave the ROCOR Mission our decision and has heard nothing further from them.

Benefit Dinner: Pam and Father have worked up the flyer for the banquet.

NEW BUSINESS *None.*

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 21, 2014, 6:00 PM.

PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.

MONTH OF JANUARY

- Mark Medick
January, 6, 1991
- George Gavrilo
January 10, 1991
- George Menas, Jr.
January 11, 1992
- Martha Jean Simmons
January 14, 1993
- Mehret Berhanu
January 15, 2009
- Natalia Lissenkoug
January 17, 2000
- George Zonitch
January 19, 2001
- Louise (Ljubica) Ford
January 20, 1994
- David Vranesh
January 21, 1991
- Helen Hoffman
January 21, 2003
- Roy Babich
January 22, 1989
- Frank Theodore Walko
January 22, 2002
- Stana "Stella" Kekich
January 30, 2008

THE BLESSING OF WATER FATHER THOMAS HOPKO

The rite of the Great Blessing of Water is celebrated in the Orthodox Church after the vesperal divine liturgy on the eve of the feast of the Epiphany, and after the Eucharistic liturgy on the day itself. It begins with the chanting of special hymns with the incensing of the water, and concludes with bible readings, petitions and prayers.

The voice of the Lord upon the waters cries out saying: come, receive ye all the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God. the Spirit of Christ who is made manifest.

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified, the Jordan bursts forth and turns back the flood of its streams, seeing the Master wash Himself.

As a man You came to that river, O Christ the King, hastening to receive the baptism of a servant, at the hands of the Forerunner because of our sins, O Good One who loves mankind.

To the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," You came, O Lord, taking the form of a servant, asking for baptism though You have no sin. The waters saw You and were afraid. The Forerunner began to tremble and cried out, saying: "How shall the lampstand illumine the Light? How shall the servant lay hands upon the Master?" Sanctify both me and the waters, O Savior, Who takes away the sins of the world. (Opening Hymns from the Great Blessing of Water)

People sometimes think that the blessing of water, and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it on people and things, is a "paganism" which has crept into the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God before the coming of Christ, as well as at the time of His manifestation. (See John 5-7) And we know that it has existed among Christians from very early times, being witnessed from the beginning especially in connection with the practice of baptism.

The service of the Great Blessing of Water itself reveals the action's meaning for the Christian people. The readings from the Bible, particularly the messianic words from the prophecy of Isaiah, together with the prayers, petitions and hymns all serve to manifest the meaning of the great festival of the Manifestation of the Messiah.

Thus says the Lord, the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing...they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God...He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty

land springs of water...(Is 35:1-10)

You are great, O Lord, and Your works are wondrous, and there are no words capable of hymning Your wonders...For of Your own will You brought all things into being from nothing, by Your power You uphold the whole of creation, and by Your providence You order the world...the sun sings to You, the moon glorifies You, the stars meet together before Your face, the light obeys You, the deeps shudder before You, the water springs serve You...We confess Your grace, we proclaim Your mercy, we conceal not Your gracious acts: You have set free our mortal nature. By Your birth, You have sanctified the virgin's womb. All creation sings praises to You Who have revealed Yourself. For You, our God, have appeared upon earth and have dwelled among men. You have sanctified the Jordan streams... Therefore O Master, be present here now by the descent of the Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. Give it the blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a remission of sins, a protection against disease, a destruction of demons...and may it be for those who will partake of it, to the cleansing of their souls and bodies, to the healing of their passions, to the sanctification of their homes, to every expeditious purpose...(The Main Prayer from the rite of the Great Blessing of Water)

Since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has appeared in the world, manifesting Himself in His baptism in the Jordan, all flesh and all matter is sanctified. Everything is made pure and holy in Him. Everything which is corrupted and polluted by the sinful works of men is cleansed and purified by the gracious works of God. All death-dealing powers of the devil which poison the good world of God's creation are destroyed. All things are again made new. Through the "prime element" of water on the feast of the Epiphany the entire creation is shown to be sanctified by God's Word through the same Spirit of God who "in the beginning...was moving over the face of the waters." (Gen 1:2)

Come, O ye faithful, let us praise the greatness of God's dispensation toward us, for He who became Man because of our transgressions and who alone is clean and undefiled, was for our cleansing Himself cleansed in the Jordan that He might sanctify both me and the waters...Let us then draw water in gladness, O Brothers, for upon those that draw in faith the grace of the Spirit is invisibly bestowed by Christ the God and Savior of our souls. (Concluding Hymn, Great Blessing of Water)