

# Iconography

Adult Spiritual Enrichment

CLASS 7

Nov 8, 2020

- Teaching in the Temple
- Witnessing of John
- The Baptism
- The Theotokos, the Holy Zone



## JESUS TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE

Luke 2:41-:52

*“His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went to a day’s journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days **they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers**, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when*

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*they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this us? Look, Your father and I have sought you anxiously.'*  
*And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'* But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.  
*Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."*

## In the Icon of Jesus teaching in the Temple notice:

- Young Christ
  - Size. He is much larger than the others sitting with Him. When someone is larger in size in an icon, it indicates their significance, their importance. Sometimes the center "Angel" (the Lord), is larger in the Holy Trinity icon.
  - He is not shown as a mere youth. He is shown adult-like, as a font of wisdom and understanding.
  - The Scriptures are open. He is teaching.
  - Colors. He is wearing red (godly, heavenly) on the inside, and blue (humanity) on the top.
  - Halo. "He Who Is"
- The Teachers.
  - All have their hands gesturing towards Christ.
  - Each has a scroll. They too, were teachers, but notice they do not have halos.
  - They seem to be looking at Christ as well as each other, in wonderment.
- Perspective:
  - Interiors are shown as semi-structures. They enclose the sacred event or scene from the back and open wide toward the front. In this icon the seating opens towards the front, drawing us in to the icon. Christ is looking at us, teaching us.
  - The basic structure of the interiors is to draw the viewer into the picture as a participant.
- Where is the Roof?
  - Events that took place within a closed area—inside—are always shown as taking place outside.
  - Grace-filled, divine events are not limited by time and space. They are universal and eternal events. Iconography reflects that both heaven and on earth are included and united as one body of Christ. A solid ceiling or roof over the scene would indicate a barrier between heaven and earth, and in Christ, in His Gospel, there are no such divisions.
- The Drape.
  - To indicate that the event took place indoors, a curtain is draped over the buildings. (Notice the other icons in the Church).

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## THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

### **Matthew 3:1 – :12**

*[In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:*

*‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare the way of the Lord;  
Make His paths straight.’”*

*Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.*

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and*



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*thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’”*

## **John 1:19--:23**

*[Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you.”*

*He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”*

*And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”*

*He said, “I am not.”*

*“Are you the Prophet?”*

*And he answered, “No.”*

*Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”*

*He said: “I am*

*‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness;*

*Make straight the way of the Lord,’*

*As the prophet Isaiah said.”*

*Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”*

*John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who is coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”]*

## **Luke 3:15 – :17**

*“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.’”*

## **Notes from OSB, p. 1270.**

- In John’s culture, a slave would carry the king’s sandals; thus, John declares himself to be even lower than a slave of Jesus.” There’s a second meaning: “carrying another’s sandal” once meant taking someone else’s responsibility. Here it shows that John could not have carried the responsibility that Christ carries, and that the Law could not redeem the world as Christ has come to do.
- Sadducees were members of the high-priestly and landowning class who controlled the temple and political affairs. They denied the resurrection of the dead. No messianic hope beyond this life.
- The Pharisees formed a lay religious movement centered on the study of the Law and strict observance of its regulations. They believed in the resurrection of the dead and

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cherished a messianic hope but taught that righteousness is attained on the strength of one's works and that the Messiah would be merely a glorious man.

- John calls them “brood of vipers” (as does Christ later in Matthew 12:34, 23:33), indicating their deception and malice and their being under the influence of Satan.
- Winnowing the threshed grain from the chaff is a metaphor for the divine judgment, which will separate good from evil.

Winnowing Fan—agricultural method used by ancient cultures to separate grain from chaff.

In the Icon of the Witness of John the Baptist notice:

- Christ and John the Baptist have halos, the others do not.
- Christ
  - Although not present at the time, is off to the side, indicating He is going to come.
  - He is standing in a round threshing floor, holding the shovel. The threshing floor is clean.
- John the Baptist is holding a scroll in one hand. Indicating knowledge.
- Where is the ax?
- The landscape. The landscapes are also transformed. God has become incarnate and walked upon the earth, and the universe can never again be the same. Christ declared, “*You are not of this world,*” and “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” (John 15:19, 18:36)
  - Christ separates His Church from the carnal, sensual world around it, and declares it to be a world unto itself—a fore image of the transfigured cosmos in the age to come.

## BLESSING OF OUR HOMES AT THEOPHANY

And the Priest shall bless the whole house with Holy Water, saying: When you were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to you, naming you his beloved Son. And the spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ our God, who illumined the world, Glory to You!

Apolysis (dismissal prayer): May He Who condescended to be baptized in the river Jordan by the Forerunner and Prophet John, for our salvation, through the intercessions of His immaculate Mother, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is our good and loving Lord.

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## THE BAPTISM

The Baptism of Christ is celebrated on January 6, also known as *Epiphany* and more properly, as *Theophany* which means, “*God Revealed.*” This is the greatest and clearest public manifestation of God as Trinity.

### John 1:26

*“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.’”*

*And John bore witness, saying, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and the remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.’”*

### Matthew 3:13 – :15

*“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and You are coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him.”*

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## Luke 3:21 – :22

*“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’”*

## Matthew 3:16

*“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water’ and behold the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice come from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*

## Notes from OSB p. 1270

- John’s baptism was a sign of repentance and forgiveness of sins only. It did not confer the power of total regeneration nor adoption as a child of God as does Christian baptism.
- Christ baptizes in the fire of the Holy Spirit, the power and grace of God divinely poured out
- Jesus does not need purification. His baptism was necessary for the fulfillment of God’s righteous plan of salvation. “Jesus enters the filthy sinful waters of the world and when He comes out, brings up and purifies the entire world with him.” St. Gregory of Nyssa

## From OSB p. 1369

Jesus Himself does not need baptism. In being baptized, our Lord accomplished several things:

- (1) He affirms John’s ministry;
- (2) He was revealed by the Father and Holy Spirit to be the Christ, God’s beloved Son;
- (3) He identifies with His people by descending into the waters with them;
- (4) He prefigures His own death, giving baptism its ultimate meaning; (See Schemann p. 7, p.39)
- (5) He enters the waters sanctifying the water itself;
- (6) He fulfills the many types given in the OT, as when Moses led the people from bondage through the red sea and when the ark of the covenant was carried into the Jordan so the people could enter the Promised land; and
- (7) He opened heaven to a world separated from God through sin.

## The ICON:

- Jesus Christ
  - Partially clothed wearing a white loincloth. (In some icons shown naked)
  - He is attentive and serious.
- John the Baptist and Forerunner
  - Stands firmly on the bank of the Jordan on Christ’s right-hand side
  - He wears an inner and outer garment covering most of his body except his forearms and lower legs. (Unlike Western art which shows him half naked).



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- His right hand is on Christ's head; his left hand makes a gesture upward.
- His body is bowed.
- He is not shown with water sprinkling from his hands (as is done in some Western art), because Jesus is not baptized by sprinkling, but rather by full emersion into the water.
- Beam of Light
  - A Dove is shown within the beam of light, which is coming from Heaven and descending to the head of Jesus. The dove is symbolic of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.
  - Further up the beam of light, at the top, is a larger circle, which is like a vault coming from Heaven and is a way of representing God the Father.
- Angels
  - Across the bank are angels waiting, slightly bowed in reverence.
  - Each of them holds a towel in both hands, as if waiting to receive Jesus when He rises from the water.
  - Both hands of the angels are covered.
    - In iconography, the covering of the hands occurs to accentuate the sacredness of the person or object that is being handled. The angel's hands are covered as they lovingly stretch them out, ready to receive and serve Christ.
    - Without speaking, it transmits reverence and awe.
  - The Gospels do not mention the presence of angels. They are included in The Baptism icon as a means of conveying we are baptized by complete immersion, requiring the body to be dried afterward. This also emphasizes their purpose of ministering unto Him.
- The River Jordan
  - Flows around Jesus' body. In some iconography, the water is shown in front of him as well.
  - Although Christ was baptized in the Jordan River, it was really the Jordan River and *all of creation* that was baptized in Christ. Canticle Four of the compline of Theophany states, "*At Thine appearing in the body, the earth was sanctified, the waters blessed, the heaven enlightened and mankind was set loose from the bitter tyranny of the enemy.*" We see the beginning of a new creation in Theophany.
- Two Creatures in the Water
  - The Man—usually shown with a water pot from which water rushes. He represents the Jordan River.
  - The Woman—she is mounted on a large fish and she represents the Sea.
  - Although they are both looking at Christ, both have their backs towards Him. Both are fleeing at the sight of something much bigger and greater than themselves entering the water. As the Psalms say:
    - Psalm 113(114, 115): 3 *The sea saw them and fled, the Jordan turned back;*" (This verse is recited in one of the prayers that the priest reads during the Service of Theophany.)



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- Psalm 76 (77):17—“*The waters saw You, O God; The waters saw You and were afraid, and the depths were troubled...*”
- Psalm 73(74):13—“*You strengthened the sea by Your Power; you Crushed the heads of dragons upon the water.*”
- They are in small proportion, compared to the other figures in the icon, in order not to emphasize them.
- The Axe
  - “*And now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees: therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*” (Matt 3:10).
  - Reflects John’s warning that our lives must bear the fruit of the Spirit.
- Notice that Jesus is not fully dressed. (In some icons, especially older ones, He is often shown naked). All throughout the creation narrative in *Genesis* we see God creating and then saying it is “good.” Man and woman, were both beautiful, and while they lacked physical garments, they were clothed in the glory of the “image” and likeness” of God. However, when they fell into sin, they hid in shame until God brought them garments of skin to wear (which symbolizes the sinful tendency that now obscures our true nature). Their natural beauty was transformed into an object of shame.
- Jesus Christ is the New Adam (1Cor.15) In shame and nakedness, Adam hid. Yet, Christ comes in His majesty, both as God and as man, both in glory and nakedness completely unashamed, representing the undefiled human made possible through Him. In baptism, we are shedding the garments of the “old man” to die in Christ and be resurrected in Him.

## BAPTISM

### Romans 6:1--:6

*“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified in Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*

OSB p. 1531 Freedom from sin is grounded in the sacrament of Holy Baptism. What Christ accomplished on the Cross—an actual death to sin—baptism accomplishes in us: an actual death to sin and our liberation from its power. Because our baptism **into Christ** gives us power over sin, it is an exact likeness of His death.

During Epiphany, Lazarus Saturday, Pascha, Pentecost and the Nativity of Christ, the Trisagion Hymn (Ayios O Theos”) is replaced with “As many of you has have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!”

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MOTHER OF GOD, THE HOLY BELT (Gr., Zon-ie)

This icon celebrates the Theotokos' resurrection and bodily ascension to heaven.

From The Synaxarian: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church, Volume VI, August 15, The Dormition of the Theotokos:

*Arriving in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Apostles buried the most holy body of the Mother of God and remained there for three days, their prayers unceasingly being accompanied by angelic hymns. In conformity with a disposition of divine Providence, one of the Apostles (Thomas, according to some), was not at the funeral. He only reached Gethsemane on the third day, and was unconsolable at not having a last sight of the defied body of the All-Holy. The Apostles therefore, with one accord, decided to open the tomb in order to let him venerate the holy body. When they raised the stone that closed the entrance, they were all filled with amazement on finding that the body had disappeared and that only the shroud remained, empty and keeping the shape of the body. It was an irrefutable proof of the translation to heaven of the Mother of God: her resurrection and the ascension of her body, united again with her soul, above the skies in the close company of her Son, to be our representative and advocate before God.*

Belt, cincture, sash, gird or girdle are often used as translations for this garment.

This relic can be found at the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos.



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## HOLY BAPTISM



**What is baptism?** Simply put, baptism is our death, burial, and resurrection in union with Jesus Christ. It is a rite of passage, given by Christ to the Church as an entrance into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

The apostle Paul describes the promise of God in this “mystery,” as most Orthodox call it, most succinctly when he writes, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). To baptize (Gr. *baptizo*) literally means “to immerse, to put into.” Historically, the Orthodox Church has baptized by triple immersion, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).

In the Old Testament, baptism was pictured by the passage of God’s people with Moses through the Red Sea (1Co 10:1, 2). John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old covenant, baptized in water for repentance (Mk 1:4; Acts 19:4). Jesus received John’s baptism, thereby transforming the water and baptism itself. In the new covenant, baptism is the means by which we enter the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:5), are joined to Christ (Rom. 6:3), and are granted the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

**What results from baptism?** From the start, the Church has understood baptism as:

1 ***A first and second dying.*** Our first dying with Christ in baptism was our death with Him on the Cross. In the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem instructed his new converts, “You were led by the hand to the holy pool of divine baptism . . . and each of you was asked if he believed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And you made that saving confession, you descended into the water and came up again three times. In the very same moment you died and were born.”

The second death of baptism is continual—dying to sin daily as we walk in newness of life. St. Paul writes to the Colossians concerning baptism (Col 2:12) and concludes by saying, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

2 ***The resurrection of righteousness.*** This is our life in Christ, our new birth and entrance into God’s Kingdom (Jn 3:3), our “newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It is our being joined to Christ in His glorified humanity and indwelt by God Himself (Jn 14:23). Our relationship with God is not something static, a legal fiction given to us by a Divine Judge. Rather, this is a dynamic and real life in Christ, holding the promise of everlasting life. Our resurrection to new life now forms a prelude to the resurrection of our body at Christ’s second coming.

3 ***An intimate and continual communion with God.*** We are raised to new life for a purpose: union and communion with God. In this sense, baptism is the beginning of eternal life. For this reason, Peter writes that baptism now saves us (1Pt 3:21)—it is not the mere removal of dirt from our bodies, but provides us with “a good conscience toward God.”

Because of these promises, the priest prays for the newly baptized, thanking God, “who have given us, unworthy though we be, blessed purification through holy water, and divine sanctification through life-giving chrismation, and who now also have been pleased to bring new life to Your servant newly illuminated by water and the Spirit, and granted remission of sins—voluntary and involuntary.”

