Weekday Lectionary (Sermons)

- Thout 1: The Acceptable Year of the Lord - HG Bishop Youssef
- Tobe 11: On the Day of Christ's Baptism - St John Chrysostom

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ عطايا نياحة الانبا يوسف · The Acceptable Year of the Lord

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

The acceptable year of the Lord is the era of our Lord Jesus Christ in which He came to reconcile us with God the Father, to redeem us, to die on the Cross to save us, to rise from the dead in order to abolish the power of death: the year of the New Covenant

How do we make the upcoming year an acceptable year before God?

1. Abide in Christ
    - Know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Being accepted before God the Father
    - The Father testified about the Son twice (Baptism, Transfiguration) - "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"
        - He is the only One that is Holy
        - He is the only One that is separated from sin - in whom is no guile or deceit
        - He is the only One that obeyed the Father even until death
        - He is the only One who satisfied the whole Law
    - God, in His love, gave privilege to all of us who are sinners and rejected because of our sin and disobedience - that if you accept Christ and abide in Him, then you will be accepted before the Father
        - "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)
    - The Lord
        - Prayed, so that when we pray, our prayers will be accepted before the Father through the Son
        - Fasted, so that when we fast, our fasting will be accepted before the Father through the Son

    - Did charitable deeds, so that when we do likewise, we will be accepted before the Father
- "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17) from the Pauline Epistle of the day
    - "[God the Father] has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18-19)
- You must be abiding in Christ, to be accepted before God the Father

2. Obey the Commandment
    - What separates me from the Lord Jesus Christ?
        - Disobeying the commandment of God
        - Drift away from the commandment of God
        - Follow our own will and not the will of the Father
    - What is the Commandment of God?
        - Love the Lord your God
        - Love your neighbor as yourself
        - "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:10-11) from the Catholic Epistle of the day

3. Do Charitable Deeds
    - Merciful and charitable deeds even with our enemies
        - See the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10
        - "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6)
        - Merciful acts are considered an acceptable sacrifice before the Lord
4. Don't touch that which is unclean
    - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
    - Do not participate in the works of darkness
    - We, as children of God, are separate from the rest of the world. We are called out (□□□□□□□□) from the rest of the world
    - "For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were tehre spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21) from the Praxis of the day
        - Athenians would spend their day hearing new things and doing them if they like, or rejecting them if not
        - Instead of keeping themselves separate from the world and listening to the Word of God that can transform them, they spent their time looking for what's new and imitating the children of the worlds

The Church is telling you - if you want to have this year be an acceptable year before the Lord, then you must abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, walk in His commandment (Love), be merciful and perform charitable deeds, and refrain from the unclean things of this world.

Tobe 11: On the Day of Christ's Baptism - St John Chrysostom

Read in Festal Works of the Fathers (page 92-101)

- There is not one Theophany, but two
  - The one actual, which already occurred
  - The second in the future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world
  - These are mentioned in the Pauline Epistle (this epistle is still read today on Theophany)
    - The first one (past): "[11] For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, [12] teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,"
    - The second one (future): "[13] looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,"
  - On this day, all obtain waters, carry it home, keep it all year (sometimes two or three years) and it does not spoil, but remains fresh. On this day, Christ was baptized and sanctified the nature of water
  - Why is it the day of His baptism, not the day of His Nativity, that is called Theophany?
    - Because Christ made Himself known to all
    - "John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there stands One among you **whom you do not know**."' (John 1:26)
    - Even St John the Baptist did not know 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 remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’" (John 1:33)
    - Thus, if we want to understand the Nativity, we must understand His baptism

- There are three kinds of baptism:
  1. There is a Jewish baptism which cleansed from bodily impurities, but not to remove sins.
     - Whoever committed adultery, stole, etc. it did NOT free him from guilt.
     - But whoever touched a dead body, ate unclean food, etc. was cleansed from ritual impurity.
     - "And whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening." (Leviticus 15:5)
  2. The Christian Baptism which manifests great grace, sets free from sin and cleanses the spirit and bestows the gifts of the Spirit
  3. The Baptism of John which is more sublime than the Jewish, but less than the Christian

    - A bridge between the two baptisms
    - John did not give guidance for bodily [ritual] purification but exhorted repentance; converting from vice to good deeds
    - "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance," (Matthew 3:8)

- John's Baptism was incomplete
    - It did not impart the Holy Spirit
    - It did not grant forgiveness by grace
    - It was powerless to absolve sins
    - "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but 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." (Matthew 3:11)
    - Acts 19
        - St Paul asked at Ephesus if the disciples had received the Holy Spirit when they believed
        - “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”
        - “Into what then were you baptized?”
        - “Into John’s baptism.”
        - "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance," - repentance, not remission of sins - "saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”
        - When they heard *this,* they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them
    - If it were not incomplete, would Paul have baptized them again and placed his hands on them?

- For whom was Christ baptized? And by which baptism?
    - He had no sin
        - “Who committed no sin,
          Nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22)
        - "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46)
    - His flesh was already privy to the Holy Spirit
        - Since He was incarnate "of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary"
    - He did not need repentance
        - John spoke to people who came for his baptism: "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8)
        - But to Christ: "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)
    - Neither the Jewish, nor the Christian, nor John's Baptism

- For two reasons - one spoken of by John, and the other by the Lord Christ
    1. That Christ should become known to the people: "that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." (John 1:31)
        - St Paul says: "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." (Acts 19:4)

- If John had gone door to door telling people "He is the Son of God" - it would have been suspicious
- If John had gone to the Synagogues and witnessed to Him, it might be suspiciously fabricated
- But when all the people came out from the cities to the Jordan and Christ came and the testimony came from the Father directly by a voice from heaven - and the coming of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, then John's testimony would be beyond questioning
- And on top of that, John said "**I did not know Him**; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." (John 1:31)
  - They were relatives (St Elizabeth and St Mary are relatives)
  - So the Holy Spirit organized it that St John spent all his early years in the wilderness so that it should not seem that John had declared his testimony out of friendship or kindred
  - How did he find out?
  - "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 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.” (John 1:32-34)
- The Holy Spirit did not descend on Christ to come upon Him or abide in Him or change Him, but in order to point Him out to all, like a finger

2. “Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15)
   - What is righteousness?
     - "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:6) - about Zacharias and Elizabeth
   - Since fulfilling this righteousness was necessary for all people, but no one kept it or fulfilled it, Christ came and fulfilled this righteousness
   - What righteousness is there in being baptized?
     - Obedience for a prophet was righteous
     - Christ was circumcised, offered sacrifices, kept the Sabbath, observed Jewish Feasts, so also He added this remaining thing: He was obedient to having been baptized by a prophet
     - St John was sent (by God) to baptize with water: "He who sent me to baptize with water" (John 1:33)
     - "And when all the people heard *Him,* even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him." (Luke 7:29-30)
     - If obedience to God constitutes righteousness, and God sent John to baptize the nation, then Christ also fulfilled this along with the other commandments

- The Spirit Descended as a Dove
  - Where there is reconciliation with God, there is also a dove
  - Ark of Noah, the dove brought an olive branch - a sign of God's love of making and the end of the flood
  - And now, in the form of a dove (not in a body), the Spirit descended, announcing the universal mercy of God and showing with it, that the spiritual man needs to be gentle, simple, and innocent
  - But that ark, after the flood ended, remained on the earth. This ark, after the wrath ends, is taken to heaven and now this Immaculate and Imperishable Body sits at the right hand of the Father

St John Chrysostom ends the homily by giving instructions for receiving the Eucharist on this Feast