Tobe

- 2026-01-11: 1st Sunday of Tobe - Joseph Discerns God's Will
- 2026-11-18: Theophany Feast
- 2026-01-25: 3rd Sunday of Tobe

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Background

Good morning, dear beloved - Christ is Born! Glorify Him! - Wishing you all a blessed Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We continue to celebrate the Nativity Feast for 8 days - until we reach the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord on the 8th day. And during that time, we pray in the joyful tune, we wear our festive vestments, and we sing the hymns of the Nativity. On Wednesday, God willing, we will celebrate the Circumcision Feast.

So the Church arranges for the readings on the 1st Sunday of Tobe (today) to be related to the Nativity because it always falls during this period of the Nativity Feast celebration.

It is a coincidence that today we are also celebrating the martyrdom of the Children of Bethlehem, who are also mentioned in today's Gospel. May their prayers be with us all.

Shortly after that, we will start to prepare to celebrate for the Theophany! On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, we will fast the Paramon fast of the Theophany. And then on Sunday evening we will celebrate the feast of the Theophany going into Monday. Because of this, the Church arranges for all the readings of the rest of the Coptic month of Tobe to be related to baptism. So we'll see that in the next three Sundays, God willing.

Introduction

I want to focus today on the person of St Joseph the Carpenter. St Joseph is called in the Scripture a just man - that means a righteous man. A man that always does what is right. He is the one who took care of St Mary during her pregnancy, and then took care of her during their travel to Bethlehem, and then guided her to find a place to stay the night of the birth of Christ, and then protected her on the way to Egypt and for several years in Egypt and on the way back. He is a very important character in the early life of the Lord Jesus Christ - but he is often overlooked.

In our church, we have a meeting named after him every other Saturday, the St Joseph the Carpenter meeting for our older youth. And we have his icon in the Church in the back, which means every time that we raise incense in front of it, we ask for his prayers. So definitely he is praying for us, and doing work here in our church!

Who is this man? What makes him so just? How do we become like him? I want to focus today on St Joseph the Carpenter's guiding principles.

1 - Guided by an Angel

The first thing is that St Joseph is guided by an angel.

1. An angel appeared to him and told him that the baby your betrothed wife is having is from the Holy Spirit.
2. An angel appeared to him and told him "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."
3. Then a few years later, an angel appeared to him and told him "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead."

All three of those times, we read that when he arose from his sleep, he did what the angel said.

But who is the angel? The word angel is from the Greek □□□□□□ which means "messenger." Angel of the Lord means "messenger of the Lord." For most of us, an angel from heaven is not showing up to me in dreams - but the Lord is conveying his message to me through other messengers.

It could be the bishop or the priest, my parents - my father and mother, my spiritual father, it could be my servant in Sunday School, it could be my friend who is pious and who loves God. The question is not "Does God speak to me?" but "God is speaking to me... do I recognize His messengers? And do I obey them?"

Most of us (if not all of us) would say that if an angel appeared to me, I would do what he said. End of story. But what about when the message of the Lord comes from:

- Abouna in a sermon
- A servant that is correcting my child
- My father of confession advising me
- My godly friend giving me a warning
- My parent rebuking me

Obedience is easy if the messenger is glorious and the message is easy... but once the message is hard and the messenger is familiar... not so easy. Once there is a little discomfort, or a little attack on my ego, then it's hard.

- When the angel told St Joseph "take pregnant Mary as your wife" - this is at the risk of his reputation.
- When the angel told St Joseph "Flee to Egypt" - this means leave your home, your work, your stability.
- When the angel told St Joseph "Return to Israel" - this is after years of settling elsewhere

St Joseph did not obey because it was easy or comfortable, but because it was God speaking. And he obeyed every time right away. No argument. No delay. No negotiation.

Many times we argue. Or we delay. Or we try to negotiate. We say "well the Church is too strict" or "Abouna doesn't understand my times" or "That's just my parents' opinion."

But if I recognize the message is from God and the messenger is from God - then I will obey right away.

If I don't obey God when He speaks gently through His messengers, then I won't obey Him when He speaks loudly through difficult circumstances.

2 - Guided by Godly Principles

The second thing is that St Joseph is guided by Godly principles. A principle is a way of thinking. His thought was aligned with God. And we will give just two examples.

Principle 1: Obedience before Understanding

None of the commands of the angel were explained in detail... how long will we stay in Egypt? How will I provide for the family in Egypt? What is the road from Israel to Egypt like?

He was simply told "Arise" and so he arose.

Obedience does not require full clarity, but it requires trust.

When my parents say "no" to me - no you can't have such and such device, no you can't have such and such haircut, no you can't wear that dress or those pants - obedience. Even without understanding.

On the other hand, parents - sometimes God asks me to say "no" to my children even if they don't understand. Even if they get upset. Even if they will feel different from others.

Principle 2: Flee from Evil, don't negotiate with it.

We live in a world that tells us "just try it once" - "it's not that bad" - "everyone else is doing it"

"Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners, and has not sat in the seat of the evil men. But his will is in the Law of the Lord." (Psalm 1)

St Joseph did not wait to see how dangerous Herod was; he didn't try it out. He acted BEFORE danger reached his door.

What kinds of places do I go to? What kind of media do I consume? What kind of friends do I have?

And if there is an evil, let me flee.

- If I am with a group of friends and one of them pulls out a vape. I stand up, and I leave. Why do I stay? Why do I put myself in temptation? Why do I say "I'll stay but I won't do it?"
- If I know that having my phone in my room at night is going to cause me to sin - leave my phone outside. Why put myself in temptation?

We always pray "Lead us not into temptation" and then we put ourselves in temptation. No, let us learn from St Joseph and from the Lord here and flee from evil.

3 - Guided by his Role and Responsibility

The third thing is that St Joseph is guided by his role and his responsibility. His role is the betrothed of St Mary and the supposed father of the baby Jesus.

What is the role of the father? Protection. Guidance. Wisdom. To take care of the needs of his family.

I need to understand my role and my responsibilities and how to fulfill them in a godly way.

- Many times a husband or father thinks that his role is just to put food on the table, and that's it. As long as my wife and kids have a roof above their head, food on their plate, and clothing on their back, I am doing my role. No! There is more to being a husband. There is more to being a father!
- Or a wife thinks that her role is just to cook and clean. As long as my husband comes home and the house is clean and the food is ready, I am doing my role. No! There is more!
- Or a son or daughter sometimes thinks that their role is just school - if I get good grades, and my parents are happy, that's it - nothing else matters. No! There is more!

We can see our responsibilities in the commandments that the Church gives me.

If I am a husband or a wife, there were commandments read to me on the day of my wedding:

- Husbands, "Excel in doing all that is good for her. Have compassion on her and hasten to do that which gladdens her heart."
  - Do all that is good for her - good financially, good emotionally, and good spiritually. You are clothed on your wedding day with the vestments of the priesthood - lead your family in their spiritual life.
  - Have compassion on her - even if she messes up. Even if she makes a mistake.
  - If I know what gladdens her heart, and I do it, then I am fulfilling God's will. What gladdens her heart is that I listen to her, I spend time with her, I prioritize her.
  - And this is the ancient wisdom of the Church - that when we do those things, we will see the good fruit of our relationship.
- Wives, "Honor and respect him, do not act against his opinion, but submit to him many times over what was commanded. Do not frown in his face, do not neglect any of his rights upon you, and fear God in all matters with him. Obey him as your parents."
  - Honor and respect him - when I argue with my husband and try to attack his ego or try to belittle him or try to emasculate him, I cannot expect good results. But when I submit to my husband, as to the Lord and fear God in all matters with him, I will see the good fruit of our relationship.
- When we see a husband and wife loving each other with these Christian principles, we see a healthy and fruitful relationship. But when one slacks, or one does not understand his/her role, it affects the other one. If I am a husband and I am not living up to my role, I cannot be upset if my wife is not living up to her role. If I am a wife and I am not living up

to my role, I cannot be upset if my husband is not living up to his role.

If I am a parent, I had more commandments read to me when my child was baptized:

- "Be diligent in teaching them reciting the holy Scriptures, and attending church services in the mornings and evenings, and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, the Holy Great Fast, and all the fasts, in keeping the Church laws and apostolic commands. Guard your children, and keep them from going to unsuitable places, sow in them beautiful qualities, sow in them righteousness and praise, sow in them purity, sow in them obedience, love and holiness; sow in them compassion, charity and justice; sow in them godliness, patience and goodness; sow in them honesty and every good work that pleases God. Nurture them with spiritual teachings; teach them the fear of God and His revered commands; raise them according to a plan and sound order; do not neglect their catechism (Sunday School), but be diligent."
- Sometimes we ask a child if he's fasting and he says "I didn't know" or he knows but he says "my parents don't make me fasting food." So that means I don't understand my role!
- Sometimes we ask a youth - who took you to that evil party? That unsuitable place? And he says "my parents dropped me off." Or if I don't drop him off directly, I buy him a car and give him freedom to go wherever he wants - so that means I don't understand my role!
- My role is to sow good virtues and beautiful qualities and righteousness - God forbid that my child learns from me bad habits - or bad language - or going to bad places - or listening to unsuitable music.
- The commandment specifically talks about "sow in them" - this is an ACTIVE thing. No one Sows passively or on accident. Sowing is INTENTIONAL. Parenting is INTENTIONAL.
    - One example of the parenting struggle: my son and daughter's appearance.
        - My daughter wants to wear jeans with holes in them or to have piercings.
        - My son wants to have that hairstyle that every high schooler in the country has right now.
        - These are not uncommon struggles.
    - The question is not about "is it a sin to have long hair" or "how many inches long becomes a sin" or "what if the ripped jeans are not revealing" - the question is, are we being INTENTIONAL in forming our children? Or am I letting the world form them? Definitely they did not get the broccoli haircut and ripped jeans and piercings from their parents. Definitely not from the Church teaching or from Abouna... So from where? From the world!
    - Am I helping them to form their identity? Or is their identity whatever the other kids at school are doing? Whatever the celebrities and youtubers are doing? Whatever seems "cool?" Whatever "looks cool"?
    - Am I raising them according to a plan and sound order? Or letting them go wherever the wind blows? And if I didn't teach him order in the small things, then how do I expect him to learn order in the big things?
    - And if I allow them to be disobedient in this small thing - how will I expect them to be obedient in the big things?
    - And the saddest part is that when the servant or Abouna speaks up, we are met with disagreement and "well Abouna is strict" - "well the servant is picking on him."

    - I need to understand my role.
- What about my role in the spiritual upbringing?
    - Maybe as a parent, I think it is enough to drop my kids off at Sunday School on Friday and come back and pick them up, and now I did my duty in their spiritual life... No! The time at home is much more important!
    - Thank God, our church gives many resources.
        - Every month, the liturgical book is sent home to our elementary school children. Let me make time for them to do it. Let me help them with it.
        - Every week, the parents receive a summary of the lesson. Let me ask my child what they learned. Let me review the lesson with them.
        - Every day, the middle and High schoolers have a Bible reading to fulfill, let me sit with my child and read the Scripture. Let me at least ask them about it. Let me remind them. Let me pray with them.
- What is my role as a parent? My role is to provide for my children what they need to grow (physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually). My role is to model good behavior. My role is to teach spiritual teaching, My role is to discipline with love.
- It doesn't mean I will be perfect - no one is perfect. But at least I will have direction in my life and in my parenting.

If I am the child, suffice it to say that my role is to obey my parents in the Lord, for this is right.

- Even if I don't like what they're saying, even if they're old fashioned, even if they "don't understand me" or "don't understand my generation" - what is my role? "Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1)

Without expanding on them, I'll add - what is my role as a grandparent? What is my role as a deacon? What is my role as a servant?

If I don't know my role, let me ask - let me seek guidance. Let me return to my father of confession. And he can help you to realize and fulfill your role in the Lord.

St Joseph understood his role in the Holy Family. And he fulfilled it 100%

Conclusion

St Joseph did not speak a single word in the Scripture. Not one word from his mouth is recorded... but his life speaks very clearly.

Let us ask ourselves if we are living like St Joseph

1. Am I listening to God's messengers in my life?
2. Am I living by Godly principles?
3. Do I understand my role and responsibilities? And fulfill them?

May the Lord grant to us the wisdom of St Joseph, to live according to His will, and may His prayers be with all of us. Amen.

Glory be to our God. Amen.

2026-11-18: Theophany Feast

Introduction

Blessed Feast of the Theophany, my beloved. It’s a great blessing to be together today in celebrating this great feast with the Vespers and Praises and Lakkan and Divine Liturgy.

Of course, the Feast is called Theophany because it is during the baptism of Christ that God first revealed Himself to us as Trinity in a very clear way. The Father spoke from heaven and testified that the Lord Jesus Christ is His Son, and the Holy Spirit appeared in the likeness of a dove.

I want to talk today about baptism.

Baptism Anticipated in the Old Testament

St Gregory of Nyssa writes about this. He says it was not just the Incarnation and the Crucifixion and the Resurrection that are prefigured and anticipated by the Old Testament, but also the Sacrament of Baptism. Someone might think that Baptism is just a “side-effect” of God’s economy of salvation - the main part is the Incarnation and the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and baptism came later. No! Baptism is pre-figured through the Scripture.

St Gregory of Nyssa gives several examples:

- Hagar’s well - when she left her master’s house and with Ishmael was going to die of thirst, the angel shows her a well with water that saves his life. Life-giving water.
- Abraham’s servant finds Rebekah at the well to marry Isaac - a marriage that was to produce the race of Christ had its beginning and its first covenant in water
- Isaac dug many wells in the deserts
- Jacob meets Rachel (the Church) at the well and uses the water to feed her and all her sheep
- Moses in the river in the basket to be saved from death by Pharaoh
- Passing through the Red Sea
- Passing through the Jordan with Joshua - the twelve stones are the twelve apostles (ministers of baptism)
- Water of Elijah on the sacrifice - he setup his sacrifice, soaked it in water three times, and then the fire of the Lord consumed it
- Elisha sends Naaman to bathe in the Jordan to heal his leprosy
- Prophecies:
  - Isaiah 1:16
  - Psalm 34:5
  - Ezekiel 36:25-27
  - Zechariah prophesies about Joshua taking off the old clothes and wearing new clothes
  - Isaiah 35:1

- Psalm 143:6
- Psalm 42:2
- Psalm 29:3-4

”But here we must make an end of our testimonies from the Divine Scriptures, for the discourse would extend to an infinite length if one should seek to select every passage in detail, and set them forth in a single book.”

Baptism is Necessary for Salvation

- The Lord told us in both the affirmative AND the negative - Baptism is necessary for salvation.
  - “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)
    “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)
  - “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)
- The Lord commanded the disciples to baptize and He said “make disciples of all the nations by baptizing them” - another word for disciples is Christians. Unless I am baptized, I am not a Christian. Baptism initiates me into God’s family!
  - “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- St Paul tells us that the Lord saved us according to His mercy through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit
  - “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5)
- It’s also very clear from the Fathers of the Church
  - “If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation.” – Cyril of Jerusalem [Catechetical Lectures 3:10]

The Water Changes

- St Gregory of Nyssa talks about how the sacramental action changes the water - same with the bread and wine, same with the oil, same with the priest who is a regular man but through sacramental action becomes a teacher and instructor of Mysteries. The same with the water. He says it’s called baptism of water and Spirit because the water cleanses our body and the Spirit cleanses our soul.
- St John Chrysostom when talking about Theophany Feast, he says “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”
- The Lord Jesus in His Baptism **Sanctified the Nature of Water**

    - It’s not just regular water. The water itself changes and is sanctified. We even at the end of baptism have to pray a prayer of dismissing the water.
- What does the new water do? From Baptism prayers
    - “Strip them of their old condition, and renew their life”
    - “Fill them with the power of Your Holy Spirit unto oneness and union with Your only-begotten Son”
    - “Enlighten the eyes of their understanding with the light of knowledge.”
    - “Let them be worthy of the washing of the new birth”
    - “Prepare them to be a temple of Your Holy Spirit”
    - “That they may be clothed with the vestment of salvation, and the armor of faith which is invincible and unconquerable to those who fight against us”
    - “May they be sheep in Your flock, and sons of Your heavenly bridal chamber, and heirs of Your incorruptible and eternal kingdom”
    - “Make them purified members of the Church, purified vessels, sons of the light, and heirs of Your Kingdom”
    - “That they may strive according to the commandments of Christ, and guard the seal unbroken, and keep the garment unspotted, and may attain the blessedness of Your elect”
- The water does all this… and yet it still LOOKS like Water. Its form hasn’t changed.

Baptism Comes with Change

- St Gregory of Nyssa when he talks about baptism he said “many of you boast about being baptized, about being renewed… but SHOW ME after the sacramental grace, the change in your ways. SHOW ME the purity of your conversion.”
- What we see after baptism, with our eyes, is the same person. He doesn’t look different. He still has the same skin color, he has the same hair, same height, etc. Physically, he hasn’t changed. So, he says, how do I know that you have changed?
- By the intentional motions of the soul - the soul separates itself from its old life. And this word separates is the word HOLY.
- I become HOLY. SEPARATED from my old life. SEPARATED from the world. To the point that my old self is not even recognizable.
    - Before, I was a liar. Now I am truthful.
    - Before, I was without order in my life. Now, I have structure and order and routine.
    - Before, I was envious of what others have. Now, I am content with my possessions - and not just content but impart from what I have to those who need it.
    - Before, I was a gossiper. Now I am affable. Now I am courteous.
    - Before, I used certain language. Now, my language is clean.
    - Before, I dressed in a certain way - certain clothes, certain hairstyle, piercings. Now I put those away. Now I dress as a prince, the son of a King.
- Like darkness - if a light is ignited, the darkness disappears. It’s no longer recognizable. Like black paint. If you put a single drop of white in it, it’s no longer black. No longer recognizable as black.
- This is what it means - take off the old man and put on the new and superior one
- We became children of God - children take on the characteristics of their father. So we look at our Heavenly Father’s characteristics and we grow in His likeness.

    - “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven“ (Matthew 5:44-45)
- Baptism is not just a ritual. It’s not just something we have to do. It is a change in my life.

So what now? I was baptized a long time ago - what do I do now?

- It’s not too late.
- When we receive the holy water of Lakkan on this feast, we are participating in a Mystery. A Sacrament. It falls under the sacrament of Repentance and Confession. A renewal of our baptism.
- We can contemplate today on whether or not we have fulfilled the commandment we received on the day of our baptism.
- And let me turn in repentance and go sit with my Father of Confession

Baptism Commandment

Be diligent in learning the Holy Scriptures which are the breath of God
Be diligent in attending church services in the mornings and evenings
Be diligent in fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, the Holy Forty Days fast, and all the fasts
Be diligent in keeping the Church laws and apostolic commands
Partake of the holy and divine Mysteries which are the Body and Blood of the Son of God that was shed for the salvation of the creation.
Grow spiritually according to a plan and sound order
Cultivate inside you beautiful qualities.
Plant within you righteousness and praise.
Pour inside you purity.
Plant within you obedience, love and holiness.
Plant within you compassion, charity, and justice.
Cultivate within you godliness, patience, and goodness.
Plant within you honesty and every good work that pleases God so
that your soul may live.
Learn the fear of God and His revered commandments
Guard yourself and do not go to unsuitable places, so that the Lord may guard you from satanic temptations
Avert from interacting with ungodly, the lecherous, the evil-doers and the wicked, and from participating in their entertainment, amusement, and mockery.
Do not neglect your catechism like the wicked and lazy servant who neglected his talent, but be diligent that you may hear His voice, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.” (Matthew 25)

2026-01-25: 3rd Sunday of Tobe

Introduction

- Month of Tobe, the readings are all related to baptism. Then, next month in Amshir, the readings will all be about the Eucharist. These two sacraments are the center of the life of the Church and the life of the believer
- 1st Sunday - Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt: God opened the door for the Gentiles to be in the family of God. Entrance into the Church is through faith, repentance and baptism.
- 2nd Sunday - The Blessing of Keeping the Word of God
- 3rd Sunday - Christ's Baptism and John's Baptism
- 4th Sunday - Healing the Man Born Blind

Background

- There are three kinds of baptism:
  - The Jewish Baptism
  - The Baptism of John
  - The Christian Baptism

Jewish Baptism

- These are the ritual washings of the Old Testament
  - These were meant to clean the bodily impurities, but NOT to remove sins
  - "And whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening." (Leviticus 15:5)
  - But if you committed adultery, or stole, or murdered, etc. this did NOT free you from guilt; this did NOT justify you
- 1st Century Judaism
  - Renovated the Temple and built many pools around it - people would be coming from all around the Mediterranean to celebrate the Feasts, and after coming through Gentile places and through all of the preparations they needed to do for the feasts, they all needed to be washed.
  - The Law required ritual washings, but the scale of the pilgrimage made it necessary to have many pools.
  - Pools were built all around the Temple that large groups can go in and out and continue into the Temple to do their business or offer their sacrifice

Baptism of John

- More sublime than the Jewish Baptism, but not at the level of the Christian baptism
- A bridge between the two
- A baptism of repentance - "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8)

- John was not giving the Jews any ritual purification but he exhorted them to repentance - convert from vices to good deeds
- John's baptism was incomplete - it did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness of sins; 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?

The Christian Baptism

- Now we have something different - this is a baptism that manifests great grace

- Sets us free from sin
  - We are all born with the Original Sin
  - “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5)
  - "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)
  - "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16)

- I become a renewed creation
  - "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6)
    - If you are flesh, you will die. But if you are spirit, you can have eternal life!
  - "Take off the old man and put on the new and superior one" (????????)
  - "That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26)

- Makes us One with Christ

    - He is the Bridegroom and I am the Bride - "the two shall become one"
    - Oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ
    - His righteousness becomes my own righteousness: If a very very poor girl married a very very rich man, so in him, she becomes rich. In the same way, we are sinners; we are defiled - but in Jesus Christ, when we are one with Him, His righteousness is considered our righteousness. We become righteous in Him.
    - Romans 9:30-31 - the importance of seeking righteousness in believing in Christ
    - Be perfect as My Father is perfect

- Become children of the Father
    - The Bridegroom is the Son of the Father; when we are united with Him, we become children of the Father
    - This adoption, the grace of sonship, is granted to us through our union with the Son of God
    - Romans 8:15-17 - "but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him,* that we may also be glorified together."
    - We inherit the Kingdom of God
    - "As You have bestowed upon us the grace of sonship through the washing of rebirth and renewing of the Holy Spirit, so make us worthy now also that we may entreat You, O Abba Father" - Fraction for Theophany
    - "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 3:36) - last verse of the gospel

Conclusion

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1)

See the great grace that the Lord has given us because of His love. Forgiveness of sin. Renewal of our nature. Unity with His Son. Adoption into His Family. Inheritance of His Kingdom.

May the Lord grant us to treasure this gift that we have, the gift of baptism. May He grant us to live out our baptismal commandment that we may inherit eternal life.

Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.