

**FROM THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULLETIN . . . VESTAL PUBLISHING, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY**

**THE GOSPEL BEGINS AT THE JORDAN**

These words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem cause us to focus on the time and place that our Lord stepped out from the background of 30 years of obscurity and into the forefront of mankind's consciousness. From the moment He emerged from the Jordan River after His Baptism by John, Christ embarked upon His divine mission to teach and save the world.

The Feast Day of THEOPHANY has a long and rich history among our faithful. Long before Christ's Birth was formally observed, early Christians celebrated the events that occurred along the banks of the Jordan with great solemnity. In addition to commemorating Christ's Baptism, this Feast Day places before us one of the most profound Truths of our Orthodox Faith: the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The word "**Theophany**" literally means "**Manifestation of God**." In one timeless moment, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were revealed to the world. As the Troparion for this magnificent day proclaims: "**The voice of the FATHER bore witness to You, calling You His beloved SON, and the SPIRIT in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words.** Never had the world experienced such an event.

Traditionally, the "**Great Blessing of Water**" takes place during the celebration of Theophany. In the prayers of blessing, we are reminded that "**. . . today we have been delivered from darkness and illuminated with the light of the knowledge of God.**" The custom of blessing of homes is still observed by many Orthodox during the season of Theophany. This pious practice further emphasizes our belief that Christ is the source of protection and guidance for our household.