

“As many as have been Baptised into Christ have put on Christ: Alleluia!”

ORTHODOX FAMILIES' NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the newsletter for families of the
Louth and Grimsby parishes. Issue No. 4: December 2012



We've started this newsletter to help us keep in touch with all our families,
and give support when bringing up children in the warmth of the Orthodox Church family.

We welcome your ideas and questions, either in person or by email to orthodox@btinternet.com

Christ is born, give ye glory.

Christ comes from heaven, meet ye Him.

Christ is on earth, be ye exalted.

*O all the earth, sing unto the Lord,
and sing praises in gladness, O ye people,
for He has been glorified.*

These inspiring words are full of the wonder of Christ's coming to us, here on earth, at Christmas. They are sung in the Canon from the time of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple, celebrated on November 21st until the Nativity of Christ in December. In other words, they encourage us to look forward to the Feast.

Our Orthodox Christian faith is built on the promise of what is to come if we will only accept it, so at this time of year, we should share with our children what the Christmas promise is all about. As Fr Michael says in his newsletter, “The run-up to Christmas can be an awkward time for Orthodox Christians.” because we all, adults and children, are put under pressure to conform to a world that talks a lot about spending money, having fun and letting people have all the ‘things’ they want, and talks very little about the Nativity of Christ, which is the fulfilment of God's promise to come to us, here in this world.

This is the real gift, not wrapped up in bright paper, but lying in an animal's feeding trough, among the animals themselves in their sheltering cave. But the shepherds knew Him, and the wise men knew Him. Let's make sure that we too say ‘Christ comes from heaven, let us meet Him’.



Services for Christmas at St Aethelheard's Church, Louth

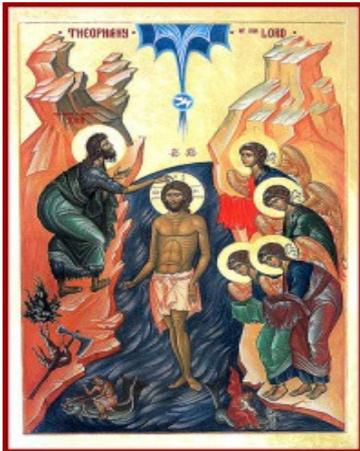
**Sunday 23rd December: 10.30 a.m. Divine Liturgy
followed by blessing of gifts and refreshments**



**Tuesday 25th December: at the earlier time 10.00 a.m. Divine Liturgy for the Nativity
of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ**

Do bring your family to one of these services

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE
On Sunday 6th January at the Feast of Theophany
we celebrate the Baptism of Christ in the River Jordan



Orthodox Christians going to the River Jordan for baptism



Orthodox priest blessing a river in North America

The icon shows Christ coming to St John, the Forerunner, at the River Jordan to be baptised in its waters. Christ is standing, as it were, on the water which tells us in simple and graphic language that he has Divine Power. St John is bowing and looking up at a white dove which signifies the Holy Spirit coming down from Heaven. The angels are waiting to receive Christ and to dress him in new clothes. This Feast celebrates the revelation of God, which in Greek is 'theophaneia'. This Feast has at its centre something that we use every day – water. We cannot live without it, and every year we thank God for His gift of water and we pray that He will bless it and that it will be something good in our lives. Christ's coming to the River Jordan restores the holiness of water; He changes it, so that we all can be changed and made holy through Baptism.

So water is important not just because our bodies need it but because it makes our lives holy. At Theophany, a big tub of water is blessed and kept in the church and we bring bottles to fill up with water to take to our homes. **So get your children to wash out a bottle or jar, and perhaps decorate it with a cross or an icon, and bring it to the Divine Liturgy so that at the end they can fill it up to take home.**

After the Divine Liturgy we all go together to the river in the middle of Louth and Fr Michael blesses the water. He throws a cross into the water three times and each time pulls it out on the end of a piece of string. In some Orthodox countries, people jump into the river the bring back the cross, even when it is so cold that there is ice on the water. We don't usually do this! **But we need lots of people to carry banners, the censer, lamps and so on, so do come and help us.** Afterwards we usually go somewhere to have something hot to eat or drink to warm us up.

Children ask the most wonderful questions! Do yours? Do you need help in answering them? Just send them via email to the address below, and in future Newsletters we will try to answer them.

Today's Orthodox children are tomorrow's witnesses to the faith that the world so badly needs. To be true witnesses, they need all the help we can give them, now.

Would you be interested if we held some childrens' activity sessions from time to time?

Do let us know, either by having a word with Fr Michael or Kh Judith or by email.