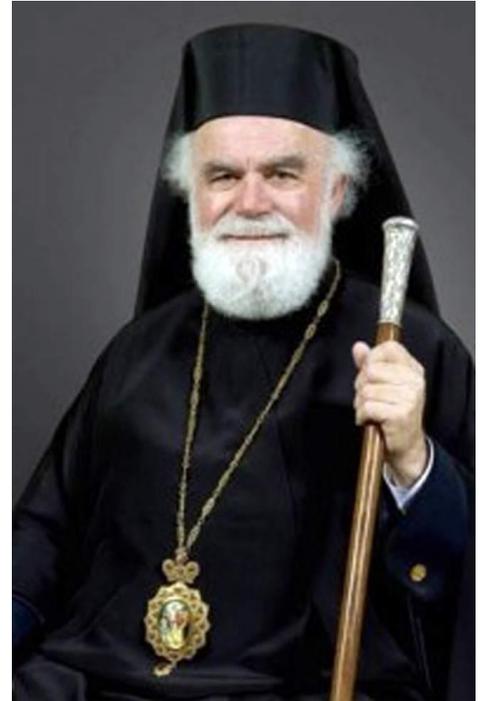


My Beloved Ones,

I would like to begin by wishing all of you—clergyman, monastics and laymen—a New Year full of happiness and prosperity.

With tomorrow's celebration of the Feast of Epiphany, or Theophany, we are closing the festive twelve day Nativity period, which included the Circumcision and the Naming of our Lord Jesus Christ on January 1st. The Feast of Epiphany is followed by the celebration of the Forerunner, John the Baptist, on January 7th.

In every Orthodox icon, the iconographer's goal is to teach the viewer a Biblical lesson through symbols. In the icon of Epiphany, we see at the top of the icon the first person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, who is depicted either by face, or more often, as radiance. When the Father is shown as radiance, in the middle of this light the Holy Spirit, the second person of the Holy Trinity, appears as a dove, descending from the Heavens.



The third person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, is of course depicted as standing in the Jordan River, waiting for the blessing of St. John. We are all aware of course, that St. John did not want to baptize Him, because John knew that He was the Son of God. However, because Jesus asked out of necessity to fulfill righteousness, we see John preparing to baptize Jesus with his right hand—with his left hand in a position of supplication, as he prays to God for his salvation. On the other side of the river, Angels are usually shown holding cloths, much like today's sponsors wait for children to emerge from the baptismal font, and then enter as Christians into the Church.

The figure of Christ is usually shown to be naked, apart from a cloth around His waist. This nakedness symbolizes His humanity, which he put on for us, in order to uplift us. My brothers and sisters, this is the whole meaning of this holiday season, from Christmas all the way through Theophany: Christ, the Son of God, the Logos, humbled himself to help us and save us from the tyranny of the Devil, out of the love that God has for humanity.

I pray that we may all have a spiritually uplifting Theophany, as we reflect upon Christ's humility, the glory of the Holy Trinity, and all the good things we have learned and experienced in this Christmas season.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta