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SPECIAL CHURCH SERVICES

Theophany

Service of the Blessing of Water

The Feast of Theophany in the Armenian Church is a celebration not only of Christ's birth, but also of his baptism. The Blessing of Water (*Churorhnek*), which always follows the Divine Liturgy on this feast day, is a commemoration of that baptism. In ancient times, this ceremony was celebrated at the riverside or seashore, but for various reasons, it was later confined to the interior of the churches. During the ceremony, a cross is dipped in water, recalling Christ's immersion in the Jordan River. Blessed oil, or holy chrisem (*muron*) is poured into the water from a dove-shaped vessel, symbolizing the appearance of the Holy Spirit at the baptism in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father proclaiming to all that Jesus is His Son. The holy chrisem is prepared in Holy Etchmiadzin and is consecrated by the Catholicos. At the end of the service, members of the congregation are given the blessed water to drink, thereby sharing in the life-giving baptismal act of Christ. As water is essential to the life of the body, drinking the blessed water is a reminder that participation in the acts of Christ's life is essential for eternal life.

Prayer for the Blessing of Water

by St. Basil of Caesarea

Blessed are you, O Lord God almighty. You have made heaven and earth and the sea out of formless waste and dark abyss, while your spirit hovered over the waters. You have created man out of the dust of the earth and have made him alive with your all-holy breath. But, he was deceived by the serpent, who offered to him as to a child, the fruit of the tree of knowledge; he was expelled from the garden, yet you did not forsake your servant and had pity over his offspring. Therefore in your goodness you worked many wonders among men of successive generations. Finally at the end of those days, you sent your Only Begotten Son from the paternal bosom. He came and was clothed in flesh from the holy virgin and went out to seek him who was lost and whom the Adversary had taken out of the Garden of Life. This day the earth becomes a new heaven, for the Son God has appeared on earth and has walked about with men. He comes this day and goes into the River Jordan and cleanses the waters and

