

# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR THE PRIEST AT THEOPHANY

## *A Note on the tradition:*

During the days following the Feast of the Theophany (January 6) through the beginning of Lent (Sunday of Meat-Fare), it is customary for the Priest to visit and bless the homes of his parishioners.

Though some traditions place great importance on “*Theophany water*” or “*Jordan Water*” being used during house-blessings to “bring the blessings of Jordan” to our homes and places of work. This is one of the “Little T” traditions that deepens our understanding of the traditions and helps us make the liturgical life more deeply present in our life without being a universal Orthodox tradition. The Russian tradition that we have inherited in the OCA teaches that this is just water that has been blessed with the Great Blessing of the Waters service on Theophany. Another name for this water is simply “Holy Water.” We can bless water any time of the year that there is a need for it. In Moscow, for example, there is a huge vat of holy water that the faithful partake of regularly. On a regular basis, the vat is refilled with water when it becomes empty, and this new water is blessed. The water blessed in for instance, August is no more and no less “holy” than the water blessed on Theophany. Water is blessed using the “Great Blessing of the Waters” service two distinct times during Theophany: after Vespers on the Eve of Theophany and after the Divine Liturgy on Theophany. The blessings are identical, and the water is identical.

All who reside in the household should make every effort to be present for the Blessing. In anticipation of the arrival of the Priest to the house, the lampada (or candle) in the family’s icon corner should be prepared.<sup>1</sup> If there is no icon corner, a small table should be placed on the eastern wall of the main room of the dwelling; the table, covered with a white cloth, set with one or more icons standing upright, a candle in a candle stand, and a small bowl, along with a clearly printed list of the Baptismal names of the members of the household should also be placed in the icon corner (or on the table).<sup>2</sup> Here in Calhan, the priest can also pray for our barns and livestock at this time, so it’s a good idea to give him a list of the animals you raise.

Upon the arrival of the Priest, he is to be greeted by all of the family members, each of whom asks the Priest’s blessing and reverences his right hand. Then a family member lights the lampada (or candle)<sup>3</sup> and turns off all televisions, radios, etc. in the home. Lights should be turned on in all the rooms of the house that are to be blessed. Then the entire family gathers with the Priest before the icon corner (or table) to begin the Theophany House Blessing.

The priest will bless all rooms of the house except the bathrooms, so you should open all doors. The head of the household, if he/she is able will carry a candle and “lead” the priest throughout the house. In homes with children, it is always good for the little ones to carry a candle or a small cross and join this “procession.”

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<sup>1</sup> In some traditions, the family also has a hand censer. If this is the case your hand-censer and incense should be prepared.

<sup>2</sup> In some traditions, the family places several sprigs of evergreen or basil bound together with a ribbon or twine on the table as well. In the Russian tradition, however, the priest brings everything he needs.

<sup>3</sup> If you have a hand censer, light the incense at this time, but do not put incense on the charcoal. The Priest will do this just before he starts the service.