

House Blessings and Theophany

The Feast of Lights (Ton Photon)

On January 6 the faithful attend a Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of the Water service to celebrate Theophany, also called "Ton Photon" ("Feast of Lights") with reference to the spiritual illumination of the Holy Spirit. The service commemorates the baptism of Christ and the manifestation of God in three persons. Large numbers of people attend church to be blessed and to receive holy water which they take home in small bottles provided by the church. Some parishioners bring their own bottles often made specifically for holy water. In most churches in America the blessing is held indoors, and the water is contained in a large urn. Some communities hold outdoor celebrations by a body of water.

Blessing of the Home

It is customary, to invite your priest to bless your home with holy water within a few weeks following Theophany. Prepare by cleaning the house and opening and lighting all the rooms. The items needed for a house blessing are:

- Icon of Christ
- candle
- large serving bowl for the Holy Water
- incense
- incense burner
- charcoal
- a sprig of basil leaves (available at the grocery store)

Place the items on a small table. The priest blesses the water by dipping a cross in it and repeating a blessing. Using the basil sprig dipped in water as a sprinkler, he will go to each room and sprinkle it in the four corners blessing the home with the grace of the Holy Spirit which also protects you from evil spirits. Save some of the holy water in a bottle in your ikonostasi (home altar) and pour the remainder on plants. Although ideal, all family members do not need to be present for the house blessing. House Blessings are a yearly tradition.

Personal Use of Holy Water

According to Orthodox doctrine, holy water has the power to sanctify and heal. Have each family member drink a small amount of the holy water from Epiphany or the home blessing. Keep the unused holy water in your home ikonostasi for future use: times of adversity, before starting a new venture or trip, to give thanks, or when someone is ill. You may drink it or anoint yourself when you feel spiritually afflicted. To rid the house of evil spirits, it should be sprinkled in the four corners of each room, so no one will step on it. In rural Greece the holy water is sprinkled in the fields and on the animals.