

BAPTISM OF THE LORD 2021

The Baptism of the Lord is a great event because it is the occasion for the first public revelation of Jesus as Son of God to the world by the Father. After celebrating the revelation of Jesus as Son of God at Christmas – to the Jews, at Epiphany to the Gentiles through the Magi, today He is revealed to the whole world through the Voice of the Father: “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”

By the way, did Jesus who did not need ritual cleansing really have to be baptized since He was sinless? The short answer is no. However, He received baptism to identify Himself with the humanity He came to save. Out of love He even committed to the baptism of death for the remission of our sins.

The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove and the waters of the Jordan were sanctified by Him and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was thus anointed by the very presence of the Holy Spirit and the heavens once closed by Adam’s sin were now opened by Jesus’ baptism of death.

Jesus in the meantime was praying, something He would always do before all decisive moments of His earthly life. So, this baptism of Jesus was a moment of decision for Him as He prepared to begin His public ministry. It marked the end of His private life, which prepared Him for His public ministry.

It was also a moment of conviction about His mission of announcing the good news of God’s salvation which would be fulfilled not by conquering the Romans but by becoming the suffering Servant of God on the cross. This moment prepared Jesus as the Holy Spirit descended upon Him empowering Him for His ministry of preaching, teaching, healing and saving.

A familiar scene plays out each time a child is baptized. The Trinity is there as we fulfill Jesus’ mandate to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. An indelible seal is put on us with a new name. And so, we are reminded of our identity; that is who we are, and whose we are. We too are sons and daughters of God the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus and members of His church, as well as temples of the Holy spirit. Baptism is thus the basis of our whole life as Christians and a gateway to all other sacraments.

Jesus’ baptism also reminds us of our mission to live as children of God in thought, word and deed. We cannot just be nominal Christians. We are reminded of the great responsibility that comes with our Baptism. God claimed each of us and gave us the grace to overcome evil in the world. May we then strive to grow in our daily intimacy with God through our personal, family and communal prayers.

Jesus’ Baptism makes us reflect on what the priest or deacon said at our Baptisms that we were freed from sin, given a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, welcomed into God's holy people, and anointed as Priest, Prophet and King. Wow!!! What an elevation of our status! In Baptism we are also forgiven all sins; original and actual in the case of the Catechumens. May we then strive to keep that dignity unstained as we follow Christ our Lord and Master whose Baptism we celebrate today.

As we celebrate this Sacrifice of Mass today, may we be transformed by our partaking of Christ’s body and blood so that we can go forth to fulfill our baptismal mission. Through our baptism, may we assist in building Christ’s kingdom on earth. May we renew our baptismal promises while making Christ known to others through our good examples of love, service and forgiveness. Amen.