

## **The Baptism of the Lord January 9, 2022**

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Imagine what it must have been like to be standing on the banks of the Jordan River that day when Jesus emerged from the water with the Holy Spirit descending upon Him and the Father's voice booming from heaven! It must have been an amazing sight.

On that day, God the Trinity revealed Himself for the first time. We see God the Son emerge from the water, God the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, and God the Father speaking from Heaven. From then on, God in all His fullness and glory would be revealed to us.

This revelation from God also tells us something about the Sacrament of Baptism. From very early on, Christians understood that Jesus descended into the waters of the Jordan River to sanctify the waters of baptism for us. Because of Jesus, baptism has the power to free us from sin and open up Heaven to us.

Most of us would have been baptized as babies and would have no memory of that day. But it is still the most important day of our lives. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us:

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit..., and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.... (CCC 1213).

So, let us spend some time today reflecting on Jesus' baptism and what it reveals to us about our own baptism.

When Jesus emerges from the Jordan River, the Father says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Just so, at our baptism, we became sons and daughters of God. Though everyone is created by God, only those who are baptized can call themselves children of God. Because baptism brings us into the family of God.

The Bible describes this mystery in terms of adoption. Just as a boy or girl can become a member of a human family by being adopted, so we are adopted into the family of God through the sacrament of Baptism. Someone who's adopted into a family now has a home with that family. Just so, we who are baptized have a home in the Church. Those who are adopted have a right to be fed and nurtured by their new family. Just so, we who are baptized have a right to be fed and nurtured by the Church.

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That nourishment is the word of God and the sacraments. Someone who's adopted into a family also has a right to an inheritance. Just so, we who are baptized have an inheritance waiting for us in heaven.

It is so important for us to have a lively sense of ourselves as sons and daughters of God. It is vital for us to know our dignity as God's children and live up to it. It is also important for us to know that when we fall short, our Heavenly Father is always ready to welcome us home and restore our dignity.

The dignity of our baptism is something we can never lose. No matter what evil things we might do, no matter how far we may stray from the truth, we remain baptized sons and daughters of God. Nothing and no one can take that title away from us. So, we can always come home. It is never too late to turn back to God.

Jesus' baptism marked the end of His hidden life in Nazareth and the beginning of His work of preaching and healing. By going to the Jordan River, Jesus publicly declared that He was ready to be about His Father's business. And His Father's business is that of saving souls.

At our baptism we are given the responsibility to share in our Heavenly Father's work. When we are part of a family, we end up sharing in the household work. As children, we might be given chores to do. And as we get older, we might help take care of the younger children or begin helping with a family business. As members of the family of God, each of us also has the responsibility of participating in the work of the Church.

For each of us, that work will look different. Some of us are called to roles of leadership such as catechists, deacons, priests, and religious. Others of us will be called to pray or to serve the poor. No matter what place in the family of God we occupy, it is important. If it is not apparent to you what you should be doing to build up the family of God, ask our Heavenly Father to reveal it to you. And be open to saying "yes", no matter what.

When Jesus emerged from the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Just so, each of us receives the Holy Spirit at our baptism. And that presence of the Spirit within us is strengthened and intensified at our Confirmation.

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is the very life and power of God. He was present at creation when life was brought forth out of nothing. He was breathed into Adam and

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Eve to give them life. It was through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus performed miracles. The Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and was then given to the apostles to equip them to spread the good news throughout the world. That same Spirit of life and power lives within us because of our Baptism.

Just as God empowered Jesus through the Holy Spirit to do the work He was called to, so we are empowered for the work we are called to by that same Spirit. That is why we never have to fear. If God calls us to do something, He will also give us everything we need to do it. No matter how difficult or even impossible it may seem, we can do it because of the Spirit who dwells within us.