

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist was a very important event in the life of Jesus. First of all, it was a moment of identification with us sinners. Sinless, Jesus received the baptism of repentance to identify himself with his people, who realized for the first time that they were sinners. St. Damien and St. Teresa of Calcutta identified with the people whom they served.

Second, it was a moment of conviction about his identity and mission: that He is the Son of God and His mission was to preach the Good News of God's love and salvation to Israel, and eventually to us, and to atone for our sins by becoming the "*suffering servant*." God the Father's words, "*This is my beloved Son*," revealed Jesus' identity as God's Son, and the words "*with whom I am well pleased*," referring to the "*suffering servant*", pointed to Jesus' mission of atoning for the sins of the world by His suffering and death on the cross.

Third, it was a moment of equipment. The Holy Spirit equipped Jesus by descending on him in the form of dove, giving him the power of preaching and healing. Fourth, it was a moment of decision to begin public ministry at the most opportune time after receiving the approval of his Heavenly Father as His *beloved Son*.

The baptism of Jesus reminds us of our identity and mission. First, it reminds us of who we are and to whom we belong. By Baptism, we become the adoptive sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of his Church, heirs of Heaven and temples of the Holy Spirit. We become incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made sharers in the priesthood of Christ.

So, "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". Most of us dipped the fingers of our right hand into the holy water font and blessed ourselves, when we came into Church today. *Why?* This blessing is supposed to remind us of our Baptism. And so when I bless myself with Holy Water, I should be thinking of the fact that I am a child of God; that I have been redeemed by the Cross of Christ; that I have been made a member of God's family; and that I have been washed, forgiven, cleansed and purified by the Blood of the Lamb.

Jesus' baptism reminds us of our mission: a) to experience the presence of God within us, to acknowledge our own dignity as God's children and to appreciate the Divine Presence in others by honoring them, loving them and serving them in all humility; b) to live as the children

of God in thought, word and action so that our Heavenly Father may say to each one of us, what He said to Jesus: “You are My beloved son/daughter with whom I am well pleased.” It means that we are to let His thoughts direct our thoughts, His mind control our mind, His concerns be our concerns.

In the Church, we all share the same intimate connection with Christ; we are all brothers and sisters in Christ; c) to lead a holy and transparent Christian life and not to desecrate our bodies (the temples of the Holy Spirit and members of Jesus’ Body) by impurity, injustice, intolerance, jealousy or hatred; d) to accept both the good and the bad experiences of life as the gifts of a loving Heavenly Father for our growth in holiness; e) to grow daily in intimacy with God by personal and family prayers, by reading the Word of God, by participating in the Holy Mass, and by frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation; and f) to be co-creators with God in building up the “Kingdom of God” on earth, a Kingdom of compassion, justice and love, and to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

This is the day for us to remember the graces we have received in Baptism and to renew our Baptismal promises: On the day of our Baptism, as Pope St. John Paul II explains, “We were anointed with the Oil of Catechumens, the sign of Christ’s gentle strength, to fight against evil. Blessed water was poured over us, an effective sign of interior purification through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We were then anointed with Chrism to show that we were thus consecrated in the image of Jesus, the Father’s Anointed One.

The candle lighted from the Paschal Candle was a symbol of the light of Faith which our parents and godparents must have continually safeguarded and nourished with the life-giving grace of the Spirit.” This is also a day for us to renew our Baptismal promises, consecrating ourselves to the Holy Trinity and “rejecting Satan and all his empty promises,” Let us ask Our Lord today, to make us faithful to our Baptismal promises. Let us thank Him for the privilege of being joined to His mission of preaching the “Good News” by our transparent Christian lives of love, mercy, service and forgiveness.