

BAPTISM of THE LORD – Year C

Today, the Church celebrates the Baptism of our Lord. As we celebrate this annual feast, I have the following thoughts. First of all, I wonder why Jesus would undergo His Baptism. The Church teaches us that Baptism initiates us to be the followers of Jesus & also wipes away the stain of our Original Sin & other sins. Most group leaders, if not all, would avoid subjecting themselves to an initiation ritual or any rules & regulations. They think the Laws apply to other people & not themselves. They assume that they're above the Laws. But, Jesus showed us how He subjected Himself to the Laws & rituals like all of His followers. He wanted to help us see the importance of honoring rules & traditions. That is how He could continue the Jewish traditions of John the Baptist while starting His new rituals. So, by coming to John for a Baptism, Jesus wanted us to follow His example & continue that tradition as His followers in the future.

But, our Christian faith also tells us that baptism is the door to Heaven & our salvation on the Last Day because it helps wipe away our Original Sin & other sins as well. I can see that we all need to go through the Baptism ritual because of our sins & salvation after this life. However, what baffles me about the Baptism of our Lord is that He did not have any sin. Why did Jesus undergo the Baptism of John if He was sinless? Also, Jesus did not need to be saved on the Last Day. So, what was the meaning of our Lord's Baptism?

Believe it or not, this Sunday's Gospel gives us the answers for those questions as following, "...After likewise being baptized, the skies opened & the Holy Spirit descended on Him [Jesus] in visible form like a dove. A voice from Heaven was heard to say, 'You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests.'" Evidently, God the Father & the Holy Spirit appeared at our Lord's Baptism & testified to His true identity. God the Father acknowledged Jesus to be His Son while God the Holy Spirit came down on Him & blessed Him. The Baptism of Jesus is one of the proofs about the Holy Trinity. That's how we have the idea of the Holy Trinity – one God in three persons. So, we can say that Jesus' Baptism is the revelation of His identity. By coming to John for baptism, Jesus received testimony not only from the well-known prophet but also the two persons of the Holy Trinity.

The Baptism of our Lord also marks the beginning of His public ministry. After being acknowledged & endorsed by God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, & John the Baptist, Jesus set out to preach His Good News & save as many souls as possible including tax collectors & prostitutes. He accompanied that important duty with a lot of miracles & acts of charity. Because of those powerful testimonies, most of the disciples of John the Baptist decided to follow Jesus instead. Now Jesus had a group of disciples to back him up besides his miracles & Good News. So, the Baptism of Jesus is not similar to ours as we might often think. Rather, it's basically a chance for John & the persons of the Trinity to testify to Jesus & help kick off His public ministry. It has nothing to do with washing away His sins & being the ticket for Him to be saved & get to Heaven after this life. For Jesus did not need either of those.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus did not have to undergo baptism, but chose to do it on His own. He gave us a great role model & a fine example of humility. We live in a world that people often use their wealth, power, fame, & social status to help them circumvent rules & regulations. Or, they think one set of laws applies to them while another one to the rest of the people. Jesus showed us how He humbly underwent a baptism like the rest of His followers. This is something we do not see in our world, especially with our leaders. Because of His

humble example, we believe that He is our long-awaited Messiah; & today's First Reading confirms it as it says: "...I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice. I have grasped you by the hand. I formed you & set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, & from the dungeon those who live in darkness."