

2025 C Baptism of the Lord Jan. 12

The Baptism of the Lord makes the end of the liturgical season of Christmas. But what is this moment of Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan all about?

Around three years ago a Catholic from another State came to the office and asked for a Baptism of his grandchild. He told that he and his wife spend quite a bit of time of every year here with their daughter. The parents of the child were not members of any church and are only going to church once in a while. The grandfather expressed how important baptism is for a child and promised that he and his wife would take responsibility of raising the child **as a God's child and a Catholic**. And of course, I agreed to baptize the child. It made me think about baptism – what it means and why it matters.

Why should a child be baptized for the forgiveness of sin? The Church's explanation, as I understand it, is while a child is yet incapable of personal serious sin, by virtue of her or his human nature, the child's life inevitably will be touched by original sin (our first parents Adam and Eve's dysfunctionality). So. Infant baptism is appropriate and is an opportunity to claim the child for Christ to remain personally innocent and to have grace to grow as a child of God.

But infant baptism is also a family affair. The parents and godparents indicate their desire and intent to pass on the faith to their child. The parents acknowledge that they themselves and their child belongs first, last and always to God.

The gospel says: When Jesus was baptized and in prayer, the heaven gets opened and the Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove. And a voice from heaven says, **"You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."** Christ's baptism is so important for us Christians.

It reminds us, first of all, of **Christ's humility**. Jesus is innocent of sin—in his case, by virtue of his divine nature, which also protects him from original sin. Yet voluntarily he subjects himself to John's baptism so as **to identify fully with us sinners**, whom he came to save. His humble nature is real. You and I get tempted to enjoy our relationship with God. But Christ humbled himself and became a servant. St. Francis of Assisi wanted to be like Jesus and humbled himself. Every time he went to preach in the churches he brought along a broom and cleaned the churches. Of course, Francis was simply imitating Christ.

Nowadays we hear about "servant leadership." There is no better analogy for this kind of leadership than someone wrote, **"I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other, and that the taller we grew in Christian character, the easier we could reach them. Now I find that God's gifts are on selves one beneath the other.** It is not a question of growing taller but of **stooping**

lower, that we have to go down, before we go up. Jesus was baptized because of his obedience to his Father. He did it to set us a pattern. God created you and me to do amazing things. But we will never be all God created us to be until we humble ourselves and become obedient to the vision of God.

We see Christ's humility, but also see **his divinity in his baptism.** It is surely no accident that here where **all three persons of the Trinity appear**—Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible. But the concept of the Trinity—that comes in three persons—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—wasn't formulated by the church until some hundred years after Christ's resurrection. And yet, here at Christ's baptism all three persons of Godhead are present. The Spirit of God descended on Jesus and the Father expresses his love, and approval for Jesus, his Son.

You can look to **nature** to show God. It may show you God's grandeur and might **but not God perfect and complete love. No other religions speak of a God whose very nature is love.** Only within the pages of the New Testament can we find such a God. That's what the baptism of Jesus presents before us.

And that brings us to the final thing about Christ's baptism: It helps us to understand **our real identity.** Christ's baptism was the beginning of his public ministry. He was about 30 years of age. There was nothing special about him until now. But now, at his baptism, he has this amazing experience **awakening to who he is, the Son of God.**

Theologians have argued over the centuries about his consciousness of his own divinity. **Did he know that he was God?** If he knew that he was God, then, how could the Bible say that *he was tempted in every way as we are* (Heb 4:15)? A more likely scenario is that **the consciousness of his role as the anointed one of God an emerging one.** And it reached the first stage of development at his baptism when he heard the voice of God saying, "You are my beloved Son."

It is certainly true for his followers **that it is at our baptism that we receive our identity.** Baptism tells us who we are: **The children of God.** When you are baptized, you are baptized into God's family, the body of Christ, the Church. There far too many people who are under the delusion that they can live a Christian life apart from the church. You may live a moral life or a very accomplishing, happy life, but **the Christian life can be only properly lived as part of the body of Christ.**

Our words and actions should reflect the great truth. Just as Christ humbled himself in obedience to the will of the Father, so shall we humble ourselves to live in obedience to God's will that in all things people may see God in His love present in you and me and may give glory to God.