

Baptism of the Lord 2014

Baptized with Christ

Today, on this Feast of the Lord's Baptism, we conclude our celebration of Christmas. Today the Christ child is revealed as the Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. On this day Christ sanctifies the waters of our baptism so that we might become children of God.

But when Jesus presents himself to be baptized, John the Baptist is puzzled. Does the one who comes to proclaim the kingdom of God need to be baptized? Does the long-awaited Messiah need to repent? John is puzzled. Why does the sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world come to his baptism? “It is not *you* who need to be baptized by me,” he says, “it is *I* who need to be baptized by you.”

But the sinless Lamb of God insists that John baptize him. The only begotten Son of God insists that he fulfill his Father's will. The Savior of the World must be baptized so that we can be baptized. He must sanctify the waters of the Jordan, so that we can be sanctified. He must immerse himself in the waters of the Jordan, so that we can die and rise with him in the waters of baptism.

And so when Jesus enters the waters of the Jordan, God reveals that Jesus is his beloved Son with whom he is well pleased. When Jesus is baptized the Spirit of God descends upon him, and the heavenly voice reveals that Jesus is the Servant of God of whom Isaiah spoke—the one who brings justice to the nations, the light of all nations, the one who frees us from our prisons of sin and death.

Jesus' baptism is a fitting conclusion to our Christmas celebration because it proclaims that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the Son of God who shares our life so that we can share God's divine life.

At our own baptism we entered the waters of the Jordan that Jesus sanctified at his baptism. At our baptism the Spirit of God descended upon us just as it descended upon Jesus in the river Jordan. At that moment, the voice of God said to each one of us, "*you* are my beloved son, *you* are my beloved daughter." At that moment God did for us what we could not do for ourselves; God freed us from the power of sin by filling us with the power of his own life. God freed us from the slavery of death by planting the seed of eternal life within us.

Through our baptism we became a new creation in Christ. Through our baptism we died to sin so that we might live in what St. Paul calls "newness of life," the life of the Spirit, the life of grace. Through our baptism, St. Paul says we were washed; we were saved; we were given new life in Christ. Through our baptism we became a holy people, a priestly people destined to celebrate this Eucharist. We entered the body of Christ, the community of the church.

But most of us were baptized as infants, and so we have no memory of what happened that day. But even though we do not remember entering the waters of baptism and dying with Christ, the power of God was at work in us changing and transforming us forever. And so we are here today celebrating this Eucharist, proclaiming this mystery of our salvation, rejoicing that we are a new creation in Christ.

As we leave the church this morning and bless ourselves with holy water, let us remember our baptism. And as we receive the Eucharist this morning, let us renew our baptismal promises. Let us give thanks for the baptismal waters through which we became God's beloved

children. Let us live in a new way that gives witness to the new life we have received from Christ.