

Baptism of the Lord
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C 2013

For the world about us, Christmas has ended, and it's time to begin another business cycle. But for us, the Christmas season and the mystery of Christmas continue. Last week we celebrated the Epiphany of the Lord: the manifestation of Christ to all the peoples of the world. And today—the last day of this Christmas season—we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord.

On this day the sinless Son of God enters the waters of the Jordan. On this day the Lord of heaven and earth comes to be baptized by John the Baptist. On this day the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world accepts a baptism for the forgiveness of our sins.

By entering the waters of the Jordan, Jesus purifies the waters in which we are baptized. When Jesus is baptized, the heavens are opened and God proclaims that Jesus is his beloved Son. By entering the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the servant of God who opens the eyes of the blind and brings light to those in darkness.

This feast of the Lord's baptism is a fitting conclusion to our Christmas celebration. For, while the world is busy about other things, we are celebrating the revelation of God's love for the world. We remember, as St. Paul writes, that "the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared" not because of anything we had done but because of God's mercy for us.

In the waters of our baptism we were saved by God's grace. In the waters of baptism, God spoke to each one of us: "you are my beloved son/daughter in whom I am well pleased." In the waters of baptism, the heavens were opened and God's Spirit was poured into our heart. In the waters of baptism, we were saved by God's grace.

The moment of our baptism—whether we knew it or not—was a decisive turning point in our life. Whether we knew it not, we died with Christ so that we might rise with him to new life. Whether we knew it or not, our baptism was the moment when we became a new creation in Christ. Whether we knew it or not, our baptism was the moment when God called us into the community of the church.

Perhaps you are thinking that this all sounds very nice, but what does it mean? This all sounds very good, but how does it affect us? It affects our life in every way possible, and it changes our life forever. For if it is true that we died with Christ in baptism to rise to new life, why would we continue to live the old life of sin and death? If it is true that we have become a new creation in Christ, why would we continue to live as though we belonged to the old creation of sin and death? If it is true that we have entered into the community of the church, why would we continue to live as though we did not belong to the community of the redeemed?

You, who are young, the next time that somebody asks you to experiment with drugs, or alcohol, or sex, Remember who you are. Remember that you are God's son and daughter, a new creation in Christ, a member of the community of the redeemed. You, who are adults, the next time you are tempted to cut corners at work or make a deal that is not quite honest, remember who you are. Remember that you are God's son and daughter, a new creation in Christ, a member of the community of the redeemed. You, who are elderly, the next time you are tempted

to become discouraged because of the trials of sickness and old age, remember who you are. You are God's son and daughter, a new creation in Christ, a member of the community of the redeemed.

If we remember who we are, we will always do the right thing. If we remember who we are in Christ, we will live as people who belong to Christ. If we remember our baptism, our lives will be changed forever.

Heavenly Father, as we celebrate the baptism of your Son, we give thanks for the gift of our own baptism. Mindful of our baptism, we ask for the grace to become who we are in your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask for the grace to manifest your Son to the world. We ask for the grace to live as people who have been created anew in your Son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.