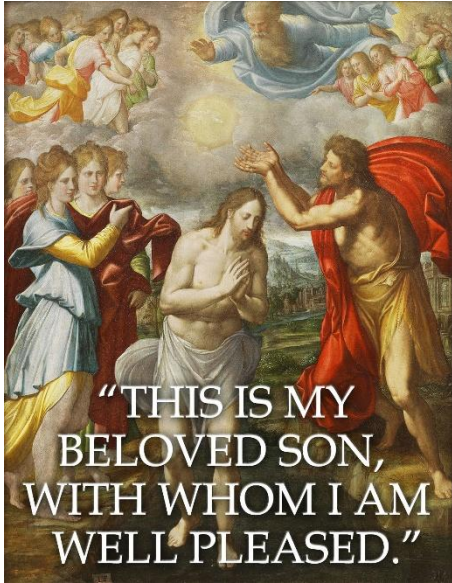


BAPTISM OF THE LORD



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. We celebrated epiphany of our Lord, the manifestation of the Lord but revelation does not stop with the star.

In the Mt 3: 13- 17, there is another manifestation, not to the Magi, but to all humanity, not through a star, but through open heavens. Jesus is revealed as the beloved son and anointed Messiah, Sinless one stands in line with sinners. When Jesus steps into the waters of the Jordan, something unexpected happens.

The Creator enters creation, the river that cleanses others is touched by the one who needs no cleansing. Heaven cannot remain silent, the father speaks, the spirit descends, and the son is revealed. This is not just an event, it is revelation. It tells us who Jesus is and reminds us who we are. We may have this question in our mind.

Why did Jesus get baptized?

St. John Chrysostom gives a simple and profound answer. **“Christ did not come to be made holy by the water. He came to make the water holy. He entered the Jordan not to wash away sin, but to drown sin. The river did not cleanse him, He cleansed the river”**. St. Thomas Aquinas says, **“Christ was baptized, not that He might be cleansed, but that He might cleanse”**.

In the same spirit, St. Gregory of Nazianzus says, **“Christ is baptized, not to be purified, but to purify the waters. Jesus goes down into the water, so that all waters and all lives touched by those waters may rise with new meaning”**. He chooses baptism to stand with us, he does not save us from a distance. He enters our life, our struggles our brokenness. God rescues humanity, not from above, but from within. Then comes the voice. This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.

what happens when we are baptized? In our baptism, the same pattern takes place. Water is poured, the spirit is given, and though we may not hear it with our ears, heaven speaks again, **“You are my beloved child”**. St. Augustine says, **Let us rejoice and give thanks, we have become not only Christians, but Christ. That does not mean we become God, but that we belong to Him, share his life and carry his name.**

Baptism is not a social ceremony, not a family custom, not simply a certificate or a date written in the parish register, baptism changes who we are. We are cleansed from original sin, yes, but more than that, we are claimed by the Father, anointed by the Spirit, united to Christ.

The next question is, how are we to live our baptism? **St. Gregory the Great wants us, many bear the name of Christ, but few live according to his ways.** Baptism is not magic, it is a beginning, it gives grace and also responsibility.

My dear brothers and sisters, on the feast of the baptism of the Lord, the church asks us, Do you remember your baptism? Many may say, I was baptized as a baby, how can I remember? Why they baptized me so early?

Your friends, your parents knew something precious was being given and not taken in the baptism.

Just as child is fed, before he/she understands hunger, and given medicine before he/she understands sickness, grace is given before we understand sin. **St. Augustine** explains that **children are baptized, not because they have committed personal sins, but because they are born into a wounded world and need healing.** Each time you enter a church and sign yourself with holy water, you are remembering your identity, I am baptized, I belong to Christ, I reject sin (Satan) and choose life.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem says:

The baptized person is marked like a soldier with a sign of his king.

St. John Vianney says to those who ignore holy water, you forget who you are, for him holy water was memory, it brought the soul back to baptism.

Dear friends, we all remember birthdays. We celebrate them with joy, but there is a greater day often forgotten, the day we were baptized. On that day we did not merely enter a family or a society, we entered Christ. Baptism is not about cake or decoration; it is about gratitude and remembrance. The most meaningful way to celebrate our baptism is to return to the altar to receive the Holy Eucharist, to thank God for making us part of His Son.

This brings us back to that question, the church quietly asks us, do you remember your baptism? not the date, not the photograph, but the promise. In baptism, we promised to reject sin, renounce evil, and live as children of God. God is always faithful to his promise. The question is, whether we are faithful to our promise, remembering our baptism means living with awareness.

This week, do something simple and holy. Thank God for your baptism. If you know the date, pray in gratitude. If not, try to find out through your baptism certificate, and still can't find, use this Feast Day. Thank God for making you the part of his body, partake in the Eucharistic celebration with Thanksgiving and ask for the grace to live what you have already received.

We are not only called Christians, but live as Christ lived, so that the Father may one day say of us, **"This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased". Amen.**