

Homily

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord 1/13/2019

By: Steve Livingston

Today we celebrate an **epiphany** ... not the feast of the Epiphany we celebrated last weekend but a true epiphany none-the-less ... the **Baptism** of the Lord! This marks the end of the Christmas Season. The decorations are gone ... and we ... **hopefully** ... look back fondly on the family time and good feelings the season brought. We have spent 24 days **anticipating** ... the birth of the Messiah and then 19 days celebrating ... His **birth** and **infancy**. Now ... after today ... we begin what we call **Ordinary** Time ... an **unfortunate** misnomer ... I think ... because now we begin the story of the Messiah ... beginning His **journey** to Jerusalem ... that will culminate in our redemption ... and there is **nothing** ... ordinary about that.

Our Lord began this journey with His Baptism ... interesting ... to say the least ... especially when you consider that John's baptism was a baptism of **repentance**. What could our sinless Lord ... possibly have to **repent**? Well ... **nothing** of course! Then ... why? ... Why Baptism?

We believe ... of course ... that Jesus was fully God **but** ... He was also fully human ... like **us** in all things ... but sin. By this act of His baptism, Jesus deliberately and purposefully identified himself **with** us ... with all that it means to be human. He had fully **emptied** Himself of His divinity and identified Himself with our humanity in an act of total ... humility ... one more sign of Jesus ... as **Emmanuel** ... **God with us** ... an act of perfect solidarity.

The Baptism of Jesus is also an act of unconditional submission to His Father ... an unqualified acceptance and indeed ... the very inauguration ... of His mission. He is submitting Himself **wholly** ... and entirely to His Father's will ... knowing, of course, that it must lead to His suffering and death.

Finally, Jesus is starting **us** ... on **our** path to salvation. As He did throughout His entire life on earth ... He taught us by His own example. He demonstrated by **His** Baptism ... that we must all ... begin our lives in Him ... with Baptism. At Pentecost ... a new family ... conceived in Christ ... would be born. Baptism was to be our entrance into that family. His last instruction to His Apostles ... before His Ascension ... would be to **baptize** all nations. By **His** Baptism ... Jesus made ... **baptism** holy. Whereas He sanctified the waters of **His** baptism ... we **are** ... in turn ... sanctified ... by the waters of **our** baptisms ... sanctified ... and profoundly changed. Our sins are forgiven ... original sin **and** personal sins ... as well as ... the temporal punishment due them and yet ... even more.

Consider ... and this is easier to say ... than it is to truly **comprehend**: Baptism **makes** us “adoptive sons and daughters of God.” It is through our **baptisms** ... that we have the right ... in that beautiful prayer our Savior taught us ... to call God ... “Our Father.” This is an awesome notion ... and one that is uniquely Christian ... and should be most dear to our hearts. For many ... non-Christians ... who see God as a **master** ... find **our** concept of God as **Father** ... blasphemous!

We are indeed sinners. We need to be saved and ... we cannot save ourselves. But in His Son's humanity ... the Father sees our humanity ... and in His Son's divinity ... the Father sees each of us and He loves us ... and wants to bring out what is best in us. And as The Father revealed His pleasure ... with His Son at His Baptism ... completing the Epiphany begun thirty years earlier ... which we fittingly celebrated just last week ... we **too** at our own baptisms ... became His beloved sons ... His beloved daughters ... in whom He is well pleased. Now as members and visitors of that small piece of our church family ... that we call the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception parish we now ask for your help.

First let me thank you all for your generous support in the past. We must now ... once again ... ask for your support for the coming year. Providing the services we offer comes at a considerable cost ... more than our weekly collections provide. We are in debt. We cannot pay our bills every month and we still have debt lingering from the beautiful renovation of **this** building completed seventeen years ago.

This weekend has been selected to launch our annual pledge appeal. Pledge cards will soon arrive in the mail. Please tell us what you think you can give in 2019. This will help our finance council make our budget. Prayerfully set a personal goal. Last year Fr. Paul challenged us to embrace 20/20/20 ... 20 minutes of daily prayer ... 20 hours of service to the parish this year ...and a contribution to the cathedral of \$20 a week. Many will be able to give more ... some will only be able to give less. I would like to renew that challenge today. I would also like to entreat our visitors to help with this effort. If you are moved by our liturgies and enjoy our music and the serenity of this beautiful worship space ... help us. Giving has never been easier. You can give at our kiosks at the entrances of the church ... you can give with your Venmo app on your smartphones ... and you can give online from our website. And if you are more traditional and low tech like myself ... we still accept cash and checks as well. Again, please prayerfully consider your gift and thank you in advance for your generosity.