

**Feast of the Baptism of the Lord - 1/9/2022**  
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Today we celebrate an **epiphany** ... not **The** Epiphany of the Lord 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 27 days **anticipating** ... the birth of the Messiah and now 15 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?

Pope Benedict XVI ... in his book "*Jesus of Nazareth*" ... offers this: Of course, Jesus had no sins of his own to be washed away by baptism ... so it could only have been our sins that he took down into the river Jordan. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan would begin the journey that his dying on the cross would complete and ... he did both for us ... for our sins.

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 ultimately 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.

When I was a youngster ... back in middle of the last century ... baptism was almost totally identified with taking away original sin. While that was ... and is ... true ... the Sacrament is ... so **much** more. I am always surprised ... how many Catholics do not realize that through baptism ... **all** sins ... are forgiven ... as well as ... the punishment due them.

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.