

The Baptism of the Lord

When we think about the epiphany, we usually think of the magi visiting baby Jesus, but an epiphany is a manifestation, a revelation... In a way is God giving us an insight into his divinity... As such we can say that there are many epiphanies, or manifestations of God's divinity in our lives, but the church emphasizes or focuses on three public epiphanies... **The visit of the magi to baby Jesus as we celebrated last week... The wedding at Cana where Jesus manifests his miraculous powers and the Baptism of the Lord, in which the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is clearly present.** Today we celebrate the epiphany known as the **Baptism of the Lord.**

By our Lord being baptized, he was showing us what to do and transitioning us to the sacramental age, the age of the sacraments. Baptism as such is the first of our seven sacraments, it is known as the gateway or doorway sacrament, because it is the sacrament that opens the door to the other sacraments, it is the foundational sacraments for the others to build on. In 2022 the USCCB updated a document called **Sacraments and Social Mission** in which it describes our sacraments, their meanings, purpose and how they relate to us individually. The document describes ten purposes of baptism and they are the following: **Baptism makes us members of one another, baptism reveals the equality and dignity of each member of the community, baptism requires us to reject sin and reassess our values, decisions, and lifestyle, baptism helps us commit to the Church's belief, values and vision, baptism invites us to a vocation of holiness and to practice charity, baptism incorporates us into the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, baptism leads us to imitate Christ's example, baptism makes us disciples to the world, baptism calls us to live in the world, seeking the kingdom in our daily lives... Finally, the Baptized are to Live as Lights in the darkness....** To me these are only a few of the many purposes of baptism and I think that each sacrament has such an incredible value that we will not fully understand them in this world, but I think that we know that they are important. I think that inherently we know that baptism is important...

I was baptized in the Catholic Church when I was 2.5yrs old, but my family was not a practicing catholic family, yet they baptized me because somehow, they knew that baptism was important. In my early teenage years my aunt joined a local non-denominational church and started to take my sister and I to the church. At the church they asked if I had been baptized, I told them that I had been baptized in the Catholic church, I didn't remember it as I was a child, but I had pictures, certificates and my parents attest to it. They mentioned that they didn't know if a catholic baptism was valid and for that reason I needed to be baptized, so they went ahead and baptized me again. Later in my late teenage years I was a member of another protestant church,

and they asked me if I had been baptized. I explained that I was baptized as a child in the catholic church and later as an early teen in the non-denominational church, they stated that they weren't sure if either was valid, so they went ahead and baptized me again... I don't know if they saw that I needed more of the Holy Spirit or deep cleaning, but I was baptized three times. Remember you are validly baptized only once... If you ask me, why did I go ahead with it, I will say, I didn't know any better, somehow, I knew that baptism was important, I didn't know why but I knew that it was important, so it needed to be right.

Baptism is important, you can go back to the document regarding the many purposes, of baptism and it falls short, but if I were to summarize baptism in three words, I would call it the baptism trifecta it LINKS, HEALS and DIRECTS.

Baptism **links** us to God, the source of all good, and links us to each other, it incorporates us in his body and makes us coheirs of his kingdom. Baptism **heals** us by removing original sin from us, giving us the Holy Spirit and its grace to continue to heal us through our journey. Baptism **directs us**, because as children of God, we have a purpose, we have a mission, baptism helps us understand that mission.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we heard:

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand. There is **the LINK...** I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, there is **the HEALING...** a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness. **There is your MISSION**

You might be thinking I was baptized over 80 years ago, what does that have to do with me... Baptism is organic, it is not one and done we are called to always be linked, healed and on mission, so I would ask, **where are you in the trifecta? Are you linked?** If you are not linked to the source you can't survive, we are the branches he is the vine, apart from the vine we can't do anything. **If you are linked, then are you healed?** We can't give what we don't have, we need to be healed in spirit so that we can help others be healed. **If you are linked and healed, where are you in the Mission?** Are you light in the darkness? Are you allowing his light to reach the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, through you?... Where are you in the baptismal trifecta... ask the Lord to guide you, to help you stay connected to him and others, help you heal from past wounds from sin and to help you in your mission.

If you do... you will certainly be Jesus's co-participant and will get to hear "You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased" just like he did!