

River of Life

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Why was Christ baptized? After all, He was born without Original Sin, and He lived His entire life without sinning. Therefore, He had no need of the sacrament, as we do.

In submitting Himself humbly to the baptism of St. John the Baptist, however, Christ provided the example for the rest of us. If even He should be baptized, though He had no need of it, how much more should the rest of us be thankful for this sacrament, which frees us from the darkness of sin and incorporates us into the Church, the life of Christ on earth! His Baptism, therefore, was necessary--not for Him, but for us. Jesus descended into the River to sanctify its waters and to give them the power to beget sons of God (disciples). He bestowed upon the water the power of the true Baptism, which would remove all the sins of the world. The event takes on the importance of a second creation in which the Trinity participates. In *Mystici Corporis Christi 18*, Pope Pius XII explained, "The Savior of mankind out of His infinite goodness has provided in a wonderful way for His Mystical Body, endowing it with the Sacraments, so that, as though by an uninterrupted series of graces, its members should be sustained from birth to death, and that generous provision might be made for the social needs of the Church. Through the waters of Baptism those who are born into this world dead in sin are not only born again and made members of the Church, but being stamped with a spiritual seal they become able and fit to receive the other Sacraments."

Many of the incidents which accompanied Christ's baptism are symbolic of what happened at our Baptism. At Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. At our Baptism the Trinity began to indwell in our soul. At His baptism Christ was proclaimed the "Beloved Son" of the Father. At our Baptism we become the adopted sons of God. At Christ's baptism the heavens were opened. At our Baptism heaven was opened to us. At His baptism Jesus prayed. After our Baptism we pray to help us avoid sin.

What great dignity has been given us by becoming a child of God through baptism! Because of Adam and Eve's sin, we lost grace, the gifts of immortality, immunity to our human passions, and infused knowledge of God. With Baptism, we receive the promise of eternal life, the grace to resist sin, and the Holy Spirit to help us to follow Christ. We have access to the gifts of the Holy Spirit - wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. We have what we need to live the Christian life as long as we are open to following Christ. Therefore, baptism is not only about avoiding sin but living the life and holiness of Jesus.

Do we remember our baptism? Most of us don't because we were baptized as infants. We look at the pictures our parents took as the only way we know anything that happened. We were baptized with the hope we would grow in faith by following our parent's example, and live a life of holiness. In the same way that children learn to speak by listening to their parents, children learn to follow the Good Shepherd by the way their parents act. Just as children do not learn to speak or act a certain way overnight, children learn how to live out their baptism one day at a time. Baptism is the beginning of living the Christian life, for salvation is a life long process.

At our baptism, either we or our parents made promises to reject Satan and have faith as it is expressed in the Apostles Creed.

Q. How am I living my Baptismal promises?

Q. How am I a witness to the power of my Baptism?

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