

FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY
Baptism of the Lord
January 10, 2021
“The Sacrament of Baptism”

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan River. The Church links this event to the Christmas season and the Feasts of Our Lord’s Birth and the Epiphany. All three feasts are in their own way a manifestation (God as a human being) of the Son of God to the World.

Let us look for a moment at the nature of the sacrament of Baptism, that Christ engaged in.

- The Church, as did Christ, teaches us that Baptism is essential for salvation. In other words, unless a person is baptized, they cannot enter into eternal life. Jesus told Nicodemus:
 - “Unless a person is born again by water and the Spirit they cannot enter into eternal life.”
- Baptism is that way a person is born again.

Baptism is the beginning of all the seven sacraments. It is received first before any of the other sacraments. For example:

- Only a baptized man can be ordained a priest in the sacrament of Holy Orders.
- The Sacrament of Marriage takes place only among two baptized persons.
- Only a baptized person can receive the sacraments of Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Sick.

For these and other reasons, the parish keeps very careful records of the sacraments a person has received.

- The sacraments are the principal ways a person receives God’s gift of sanctifying grace; essential for the life of the soul.

Baptism then is that visible sign that:

- A person accepts Jesus as his Lord and Savior,
- Is committed to following his Gospel message.
- It is a personal and public statement of conversion to Christianity (a signature of intent to live the Christian life).

And so, we may say to ourselves, “Why was Jesus baptized in the Jordan River?” He is God and there is no sin in Him?

Jesus is God – and God has a purpose for everything he does.

- In being baptized Jesus set an example for his disciples and us to follow.
- John’s baptism was a preparation for the ultimate Baptism into Jesus Christ.
- John came to prepare the way for the Messiah.

What happened immediately after Jesus was baptized?

- The Spirit sent him into the desert to fast and pray in preparation for His mission in the world.
- And in the desert, he was tempted by the devil and was victorious over the devil's temptations.

Every person who is baptized lives in this world. Like the desert for Jesus, the world is a place of temptation to sin and of hardship. Baptism is a preparation through God's grace for us to be victorious over the devil's temptations and to remain steadfast in our faithfulness to the will of God until the end of our life; our desert journey with Christ.

Jesus was baptized and He wishes that all persons be baptized who want to share eternal life with Him.

First Reading:

In the First Reading, God said to the people through the prophet Isaiah, "All who are thirsty come to the water and drink."

To the woman at the well, Jesus promised "living water". Such, that she would not thirst again.

- Jesus is the source of this living water through Baptism.

Another very important purpose to our Lord's Baptism was that God revealed Himself as Trinity for the first time.

- Jesus the Divine son of God was present.
- The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended on Him.
- And God the Father spoke such that people could hear him, "This is my Beloved Son..."

All three persons of the Trinity present.

- God the Father.
 - God the Son.
 - God the Holy Spirit.
- > Professed in the Creed.

All these and many other mysteries took place at our Lord's Baptism.

The Church, therefore, obeys the command that Jesus gave to his disciples: "Go and teach all nations. Baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

- Be sure to have your babies baptized early.
- Encourage others to be baptized as well.