

**The Baptism of Our Lord: January 9<sup>th</sup> 2022**  
**“Let It Be So Now”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Isaiah prophecies of Jesus, *“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations... <sup>6</sup>I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, <sup>7</sup>to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”*<sup>1</sup>

Christmas Day, John proclaimed exactly who this light is, *“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*<sup>2</sup>

Of all the things John did, perhaps the most significant was read today – John the Baptist was called to baptize Jesus. That was it. That was his main purpose and duty in life. The other baptisms, the fiery sermons, the strange clothing and prophetic life were all subservient to, and even the consequences of, this great duty. Through his hands, the Anointed One was anointed.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 42:1, 6–7

<sup>2</sup> John 1:4–14

For as staunch as John was, we see a bit of fear in him through this text. The curse of Eve still threatens him. His desire was not to listen to the heavenly bridegroom; he didn't wish to readily submit to the Word of God when such a simple request was issued. No, his desire was to rule. He wanted to be lord. He wanted to be in charge of the interaction. It may simply have been spoken in ignorance or disbelief, but the effect is still the same—instead of listening and submitting in faith, he challenged the words of the Lord. He sought his own understanding of the events before him, and like Adam and Eve, wanted to be like God.

This is the curse that affects us all. We all chafe under authority. We can be taught these words over and over again, and yet, how many still cringe at the word submission? How many wives rejoice in hearing those words read at their wedding? How many brides-to-be wish to write their own vows, so that these words can be removed, and how many men go along with it, because they don't want to be the evil dictator who presses the issue to submit? In the sinful world, our sinful minds hear words like submit and authority and instantly tie them to other words like cruelty and tyranny; this is one of the greatest gifts Satan has given to us. It is the inheritance of sin, the ancient discontent that has cursed our race and marks us as fallen, poor, miserable sinners. It drives us from the gifts of God to seek pleasure in evil and honor among liars. Reviling in covetousness and hunger for envious power.

When John comes to the culmination not only of his career but of time itself, he hesitates. "I need to be baptized by you." He says. He means: "This isn't quite right. I am only a man. How can I do such a thing? How can I, with my dirty thoughts, my secret laziness, my pride, how can I anoint the Anointed One? Isaiah fell on his face and was afraid in the Temple. You have said no man can see the face of God and live. Yet, am I to place my hands on God and put Him in His place? Am I to mark the Lamb for slaughter, to ordain Him as the priestly victim when I know full well there will be no angel to stop the knife? This is too much for a mere man. He should just do it Himself."

The response of Jesus is telling of the nature of God. What does Jesus say? “***Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.***”<sup>3</sup> Upon hearing the Word of God, John is changed. By the Word from the Word made flesh John was given the strength to do what needed to be done. Jesus was plunged into the flowing sewage of our sins, was counted as guilty, stricken by God, driven from there into the wilderness to face the adversary with our sins strapped to His back, without angelic defenders, without food or water. The full force of God’s own just wrath will come upon Him. He will drink the cup of God’s wrath against sin down to the very bitter dregs. He will be crucified upon the cross for the entire world to see His exposed shame. He will be forsaken by God and die upon that raised bar of wood.

Why? For all righteousness to be fulfilled, for God to keep His Word and promise that sinners are spared and the world saved, “***For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.***”<sup>4</sup> He gives His Servant, “***as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, <sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.***”<sup>5</sup>

It is easy to sympathize with John, because we don’t care that much for authority either. We don’t like to work, or to volunteer, to give our time, our efforts, or our money unless there is some kind of recognition in it for us. We suffer the curse of not wanting to submit. We know what it is to chafe under our duties. We don’t want to do the hard work of parenting, of changing diapers and saying “no,” of enforcing order and discipline. We want to be popular, friends with our children, and wish they would learn to be a man or a woman from someone else. It takes too much time to talk to them. It is easier to buy them off, to give them candy or games, to amuse them enough to leave us alone. For it is more fun to talk to our friends or watch TV or amuse ourselves or use our children as sources of entertainment.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 3:15

<sup>4</sup> John 3:17

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 42:6–7

The same goes for husbands and wives. We just don't want to do the work. If we want our children to be our friends, to entertain us and make us feel good about ourselves, we want our spouses to be our admirers and lovers, but we do not want to serve. We do not want to wash the dishes, rub their feet, listen to their seemingly never-ending stories about whatever it is that is needed of us. We would rather they submit and leave me alone. Just do what I say, but don't hold me accountable. Our sinful nature doesn't want a spouse, one who is in front of our face, because it's too much work; we would rather have a slave who does the work for us. Then when they don't work, we can accuse them of either laziness or tyranny.

Because of my vocation, I will tell you, I would argue no one knows John's hesitation better than those who have been called into the Office of the Holy Ministry. The man who serves in this office without fear is the man who serves without faith. To handle the holy things of God, not merely His Body and His Blood which so terrified our forefathers in the middle ages, but to dare to handle, to proclaim, to teach His Word, is to risk one's very soul. The temptations are great, and great men of great character and learning have fallen prey to seductions of every kind, which sparks the old well-known phrase, "The road to Hell is paved with the skulls of priests."

Those who aspire to such office must beware, awake, alert and sober-minded. They are to take care of not just their own wife, but the Bride of Christ. They stand in a special place to her, and so, they are to called and charged to be on guard; to teach the Truth as though your life depended upon its purity, for it does. This fear can easily paralyze mortal men, and pastor's must always be reminded the only antidote is the Word of God, "***Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.***"<sup>6</sup>

John did not make Jesus the Messiah. He was simply the instrument by which God in the Flesh was anointed for His work. Anyone could have done what John did. It wasn't a highly technical art. It didn't require a lot training or experience to physically do what John did, but God called John for it, to it, in order to fulfill all righteousness. It was John's purpose.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 3:15

We'll probably never know why Jesus didn't just do it Himself. What we do know is that God gives us a share in His kingdom. It was fitting for Jesus and John to fulfill all righteousness. It is fitting for you, too, to cooperate with God in good works, in your vocations. God calls us to His kingdom, to rule alongside of Him, and He uses you for good in an evil world.

Children are a good example of this. The children that are born to us are not ours. They are His. He is their true Father. They are entrusted to us, and through us God provides for them. He could have given them to anyone, but He gave them to us. We are the perfect match, the exactly right father and mother for that child, and that child for us. There are times where the fallen sinful flesh fails; it becomes too self-centered and that child is cared for by others through foster care or adoption. Either way, God is still working. Either way, we would be fools if we didn't feel inadequate for the task, but God provides. He says "Let it be so now. I know what I am doing."

We can say the same of husbands and wives, of governments and citizens, of congregations and pastors. These vocations are all defined by duty. In a few moments, I will ask the elected officers to come forward. Those men and women whom you have chosen among you to fill certain roles and to whom you have given certain responsibilities and duties to oversee and perform on your behalf. While they are rightly called duties or obligations, truly fulfillment of them brings great joy and contentment.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, nothing satisfies like being the person God has called you to be. It is what Paul spoke of when he said he had learned to be content. It is what the Stoics skated around and got so close to. It is wise enough to have become bad poetry in the form of cliches: "Bloom where you are planted." or "Let go and let God." Those sayings, though trite, are wise and true. What God gives is the opposite of that ancient discontentment passed on by Eve. What parent amongst us has not felt true contentment as their child read aloud or they watched their child help another? What parent did not feel at peace with all the world simply because they let go of the bike and the child rode down the road on his own? These duties are too great for us. We are inadequate. But God has called us to them. God will bless us in them, and in them God gives some of our greatest and best joys.

Of all the vocations, all the things to which God has called you, the first is Baptism. Before you are anything else you are Baptized. You belong to God. His Name is upon you. He has taken you to the Jordan river and joined you to Himself. He has buried you in His death and raised you to life in His resurrection. You have been anointed. You will bear a cross, but you have also been cleansed. This vocation is also defined by duty. But as with all godly vocations, its validity is not determined by obedience or faithfulness, but by the call, the Word of God.

John was not worthy in himself to baptize Jesus, but Jesus fulfilled John's righteousness. He made it full. Where John was lacking, Jesus provided. Where John was failing, Jesus forgave. He declared John worthy, fully righteous, and then gave him a good work to do. That is how you live in your vocations, even in Baptism. God provides what you need. He fills your righteousness. You are baptized. That is a historical, indisputable reality. You belong to God and He is well-pleased with you. He will speak in His Word. He will show you the way. He will make you content. He will give you peace. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of the Church**  
**The Baptism of Our Lord**  
**9 January 2022**

Heavenly Father, You have fulfilled all righteousness in the Baptism of Your beloved Son. As we have received this righteousness by our Baptism into Him, make us bold in faith and fervent in love, that we may live out heavenly lives even in this world. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, as You have opened heaven to Your Church through Holy Baptism, give her faithful teachers to proclaim Your Son, Jesus Christ, and all that accords with godliness, that many would repent of their sins and join Him in His heavenly kingdom. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Preserve the family, O God, especially all Christian homes. Turn husband and wife toward one another in love, equip fathers and mothers for their holy duty as teachers of the faith, and preserve all children in the saving faith and certain promises of their Baptism unto life everlasting. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, You break the wicked with Your rod for the sake of Your beloved children. Help us at all times to serve You with fear and to seek refuge always in the kingdom of Your Son. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, Your Son, Jesus, is the true Christ and the true king of this world. Grant great humility to the rulers of the nations, *especially Joseph, our President, and Kim, our Governor*, that they would submit to the preaching of His Holy Word for the sake of their own souls and for the good of Your holy people. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation, bless those who celebrate baptismal anniversaries this week, especially, *Caden*, grant that by Your Word and Spirit they may faithfully keep the covenant into which they have been called, boldly confess their Savior, and finally share with all Your saints the joys of eternal life; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You have promised to send Your holy angels to guard and keep Your children. We thank and praise You for the gift of life and for the protection and care you have provided as *Darlo* celebrate his birthday. Grant that he may grow in grace, continue to know Your loving-kindness, abide in the confession of Your care and protection, serve You faithfully all the days of his life and finally come to the fullness of Your joys in heaven; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You sent Your Son to serve Your people and deliver them from sin and death. Because we long for Your salvation, bring us out of our afflictions and uphold all those bruised in body, soul, mind, heart, and spirit [*especially Carmen, Marvin, Pam, Zoey, Tricia, and those we name in our hearts*]. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In Holy Baptism, You have opened the heavens to Your children. Grant that all those baptized into Your Son would worthily receive the heavenly feast of His body and blood for their forgiveness, life and salvation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, You manifested Yourself with the Holy Spirit in the fullness of grace at the Baptism of Your dear Son. With Your voice, You directed us to the One who has borne our sins, that we may receive grace and forgiveness. Keep us, we implore You, in the true faith. Since we have been baptized in accordance with Your command and the example of Your Son, strengthen our faith by Your Holy Spirit and lead us to everlasting life and salvation; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**