

## **THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD**

### **A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST**

**January 8/9, 2022**

The Christmas season comes to an end today as we celebrate the baptism of the Lord. It is after Jesus's baptism that He began His public ministry. But before starting His ministry, He went to prepare Himself in the desert where He fasted and prayed for forty days and forty nights.

We know that baptism washes away sin and cleanses us of all defilement. But Jesus's baptism is different. He was sinless and so did not need washing away of His sins. He was baptized to make the waters of baptism holy. It was also through His baptism that He was made known as the Son of God. This was when the Spirit descended upon Him and the voice of the Father was heard saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".

John the Baptist also testified that it was through the Lord's baptism that he knew He was the Messiah. He said: "I did not know Him myself, but He who sent me to baptize with water had said to me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one to baptize with the Holy Spirit'. I have seen and I testify that He is the chosen One of God," (Jn.1:31-34). There is a difference between John's baptism and that of Jesus, and was explained by Paul to some disciples in Ephesus; (Acts 19:1-7).

Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into the whole world to baptize in the name of the Trinity; (Mt.28:19). Baptism has become a mark of membership of the community of believers in Christ, as circumcision was for the Jews. That is, through baptism, one becomes a member of the Christian community and a child of God. Through baptism, we die with Christ and rise with Him; (Rom.6:4). This means we die to sin and rise to live a new life in Christ. After that we all become one in Christ; there is no Jew or Gentile. That is why in the second reading we heard Peter telling those gathered in the house of Cornelius: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears Him and acts uprightly is acceptable to Him".

The things used for baptism remind us of who we become and how to live our lives. We are first exorcised from the evil one and strengthened with the oil of Catechumens. Then we are washed with water, anointed with chrism which makes us sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingship status of

Christ. Then we receive the light and white cloth, reminding us to be the light of the world, and to live a life of purity. Using these simple and common objects, God shows His power to save. Before we are washed with the water, we promise to do away with Satan and everything that goes with him.

What has come of us after our baptism? Are we still faithful to our promises or have we gone back to what we promised to reject? We have to live as new creatures in the Lord. We should not forget that among those who were baptized after Pentecost were Ananias and Saphira who died because they were not faithful and truthful to the Lord.

Are we still a “chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God who called us out of the darkness into His wonderful light?” (1Pet.2:9). Any time we break the promise of our baptism, we cease to be “Christians”. There is nothing like a bad Christian, because Christ has no two characteristics – good and bad; He is always good. The name Christian means someone who lives like Christ.

Baptism makes me a Christian, so I am a Christian before becoming a priest. My life as a priest is based on my Christian principles. If I am a ‘faithful’ Christian, then I will be a faithful priest. The Christian principles should help you to be a good citizen and faithful to your career or profession.