

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

+

Clarence Day was a famous stockbroker and business man of the late 19th century. He was a wealthy man, with a beautiful wife and children. His story is portrayed through the movie, *Life with Father*. Clarence Day thought of himself as a Christian, even as a member of the Episcopal Church. However, when his son begins to prepare for his confirmation it is revealed that Clarence Day had never been baptized or confirmed. In the late 19th century it would have been scandalous for an upstanding, respectable Episcopalian not to have ever been baptized. Instead of taking care of the matter right away, and going to be baptized, Mr. Day instead flat refused to be baptized. He made excuses saying that he would force his way into heaven, or that he would be allowed in because his wife was such a good person, or that he would climb over the fence into heaven. Mr. Day was the total opposite of the virtues that St. Paul exhorts us to in today's Epistle, except that he was not slothful in business. Mr. Day took this to such an extreme that he was consumed by his business, he even expected his home and family life to run like a business. The most poignant line of the movie comes when his son, studying his catechism says to his father, *but father if you are not baptized then in the sight of the church you have no name*. In spite of the great name he had made for himself in business, in spite of being a confessed Episcopalian, by knowing he needed to be baptized and by refusing it, his name would mean little in heaven.

This season of Epiphany reminds us of the manifestation of Jesus Christ to all people as the promised Son of God, the Messiah. It reminds us of how Jesus has shown us throughout His entire life that He is the Son of God, the Word and Wisdom of God. From drawing the wise men to Him on Epiphany, to His teaching in the Temple at the age of twelve, to His Baptism in Jordan, and to His changing the water into wine at the Marriage in Cana. But these are not just episodes in the life of Christ but are the inaugurations of the Sacraments of the Church. The finding of Jesus seated in the Temple astonishing the great Jewish theological doctors is the inauguration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, when we take ownership and responsibility for our faith. When we are Confirmed, we are expected to be able to discuss and recite the Articles of our Faith, though not to the great level that the Word and Wisdom of God was able. The Baptism of Jesus is the christening of the Sacrament of Baptism which makes us a partaker in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and a member of His Church. The marriage at Cana, teaches us that not only is Jesus the creator of the world through His changing the water in wine,

but it shows us that Jesus desires to be invited to every wedding, and made a member of every marriage, so that marriage can be a path for us to everlasting life.

This Sunday in Epiphany we hear the Gospel record of the Baptism of Jesus by St. John the Baptist. This is one more manifestation of Jesus to all who witnessed and hears of His Baptism. We hear the admission of St. John the Baptist, who is astonished that Jesus asks him to baptize Him. Immediately after the baptism of Jesus we hear that the heavens were rolled open, a dove, a symbol of the Holy Spirit descends on Him, and a voice from heaven, the voice of God the Father says, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. Jesus is baptized by John not because He needs it, but because we need it. He makes the purification of humanity His own, because He will wash away humanity's sin, grant regeneration, and reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity. His baptism is necessary for the fulfillment of God's plan for salvation. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the great 4th century Church Father and Doctor of the Church writes, *Jesus enters the filthy, sinful waters of the world and when He comes out, brings up and purifies the entire world with Him*.

Jesus commands at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, before His Ascension, that His disciples go out into all lands baptizing in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For this reason, we are commanded to be baptized. We are baptized and set apart from the world for a life in Jesus Christ. We are buried and risen with Him through the waters of baptism, and we are grafted into the Church and made the adopted Sons of God. We must remember that Baptism is not just having water poured over our heads while the right words are said, but that we are also signed with the cross and given a Christian name. The vows made at Baptism make this clear; that we renounce the devil and the world, that we commit to learn the articles of the Christian faith, and that we strive to obey God's will and commandments all the days of our life. Even if we are Baptized and refuse to make these vows, then in the sight of God we will have no name in heaven.

It is proof of God's mercy though that He gives to some a lifetime of opportunities for the Holy Spirit to turn them away from the world and back to Himself. To some, like Mr. Clarence Day, He gives a wife and children who even move to compel him into being baptized. This is another beauty of the Church, that a baby's baptism is no less valid than a believer's baptism. Baptism is so simple that even a baby can receive the sacrament, but so mysterious that it takes a lifetime to realize the fruits of it. May we strive to live into our Baptism with all of our hearts, with all of our minds, with all of our souls, forever rededicating ourselves to Christ, that when we get up to heaven we find our name written in golden ink in the book of life. Amen.