

January 9, 2023

Good Morning!

~Last night's presentation at the Parish Mission was terrific. We learned about what keeps us from getting closer to God - the three "D's". Distractions, Disappointments and Demons! Fr. Garrott gives great examples that really make you think! If you didn't make it last night, then please try to come tonight - you won't be sorry.

~Mass at 8:30 this morning with Fr. Bill Garrott with confessions after Mass.

~Mission tonight begins with a Rosary at 6:30; followed by a one hour presentation by Fr. Garrott of The Son's Healing. Confessions with Fr. Garrott occurs after the presentation.

~Today my gratitude is for Jan Heithaus who assisted with messaging last week while I was out of town! Jan has done a great job over the last two years (almost) helping all of us grow in our faith with the religious information she has provided!

1. Today's Readings: [The Baptism of the Lord | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Today we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. But Our Lord was without sin and incapable of sinning so why was He baptized? Hence today's article: The Baptism of Jesus: What Happened and Why.

3. Quote of the Day:

~"Today let us do honour to Christ's baptism and celebrate this feast in holiness. Be cleansed entirely and continue to be cleansed. Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men, for whom His every word and every revelation exist. He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world!" *St. Gregory Nazianzen*

St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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Linda McCormick
St. Joseph Catholic Church & School
1200 Cornelia Road
Anderson, SC 29621

Phone: (864) 225-5341, ext. 102

Fax: (864) 225-6432

The Baptism of Jesus: What Happened and Why?

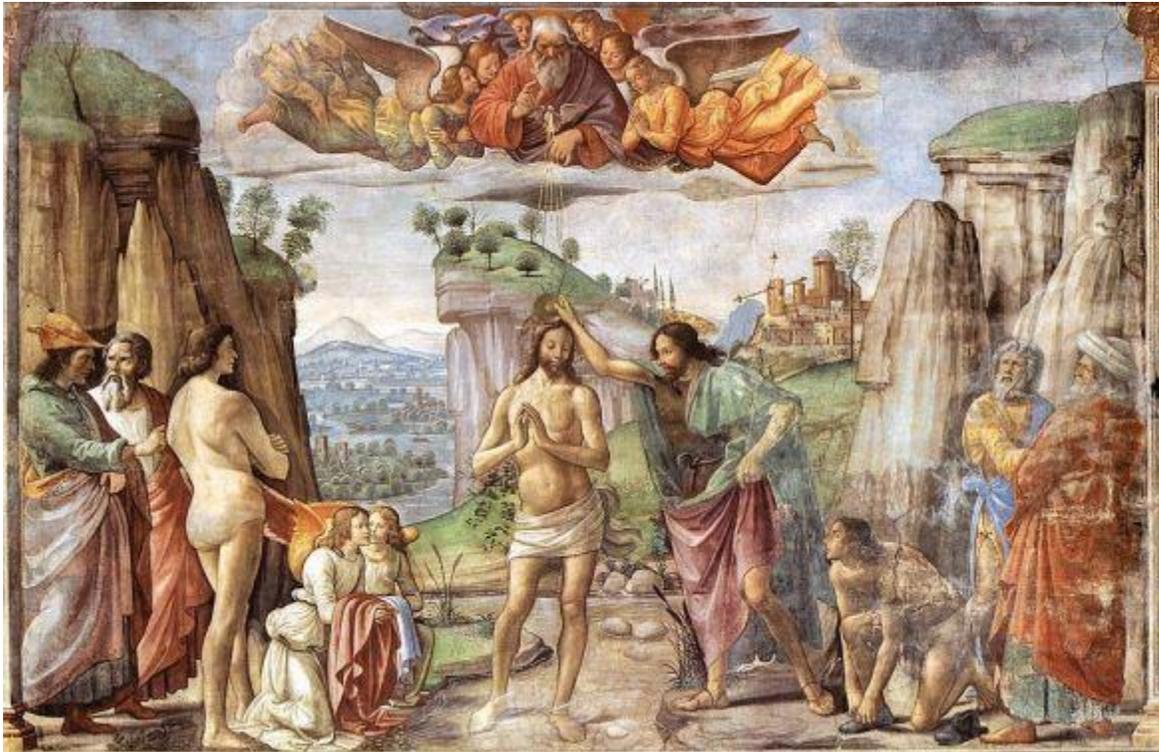
I have been reading a few good articles about Our Lord's baptism on Catholic websites, one by Carl Olson for the *Catholic World Report*, another by Monsignor Charles Pope for the Archdiocese of Washington website, and lastly the Sunday sermon of Pope Benedict XVI.

Carl Olson cites a number of the fathers of the Church commenting on the mystery of the baptism of the sinless Son of God. Saint Justin the Martyr sees in it a major epiphany, a "manifestation," not only of the Incarnate Son, but also of the Father and the Holy Ghost, giving their testimony in visible form to the divinity of Jesus. The heavens were opened, and a Voice was heard from above: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"; the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove appeared over the head of Christ and "remained upon Him" as He was baptized by John in the water of the River Jordan. All four Gospels record this ineffable *kenosis* of the Almighty Word Incarnate. "I ought to be baptized by thee," protests the Baptist, "and comest thou to me?" Then Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now" (Matt. 3:14,15).

The Third Person of the Trinity had already anointed Jesus at the moment of the Incarnation in the womb of Mary, in the union of the two natures, God and man, in the Person of Christ. At the *Fiat* of Mary, the Eternal Son became the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, through the power of the Spirit, Eternal Love, in His overshadowing of the Blessed Virgin. Saint Irenaeus speaks about man's union with Christ and his own participation in that anointing at baptism, such that man is through water and the word made anew in Christ. "Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death? . . . So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.... For the wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:3,11, 23). "For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2).

Saint Hippolytus, Origen, and Saint Gregory of Nyssa all speak about the greatness of the River Jordan whose waters were chosen to be the first sanctified by the Baptism of Our Lord, and from which all the waters of the earth receive this sacramental power. In his treatise, *On the Baptism of Jesus*, Saint Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) wrote, "For Jordan alone of rivers, receiving in itself the first-fruits of sanctification and benediction, conveyed in its channel to the whole world, as it

were from some fount in the type afforded by itself, the grace of Baptism.” Joshua, as a figure of Christ, who led his people into the Promised Land, had to cross the Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant. At the presence of the Ark the waters of the river divided, and a channel formed to make a path for the Israelites. So, too, did the Anointed One, Christ our Lord, divide the waters of the Jordan with His own Body leading His people to the Promised Land by sanctifying this same water with His baptism and opening the gates of Heaven to mankind.



Baptism of Christ, by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494)

Water has this quantitative continuity by its nature. It is one, not many. The waters of the Jordan flow into the Dead Sea, which has no outlet but one, and that is the sun. And it is the sun that unites all the waters of the earth by its power of evaporation, filling the sky with the saturated clouds that pour down rain upon the land and sea.

This theme, too, was highlighted by the Benedict XVI in one Sunday address, where he spoke of the water prior to Christ’s baptism as representing sinful humanity, waiting to be purified by the Sinless One, the Lamb of God:

“Having reached adulthood, Jesus begins His public ministry by going to the River Jordan to receive from John the baptism of repentance and conversion. What

happens may appear paradoxical to our eyes. Does Jesus need repentance and conversion? Of course not. Yet He Who is without sin is placed among the sinners to be baptized, to fulfil this act of repentance; the Holy One of God joins those who recognize in themselves the need for forgiveness and ask God for the gift of conversion – that is, the grace to turn to Him with their whole heart, to be totally His.”

Monsignor Pope expounds upon the mystery that in entering the waters of the Jordan Jesus takes all who would ever be baptized with Him. He likens Christ to the Old Testament figure of the pillar of cloud and fire that “went before” the Israelites to guide them in the desert by day and night, and, after forty years of trial, preparation, and education, finally leads them through the Red Sea into the Promised Land.

He quotes Saint Maximus to this effect: “I understand the mystery as this. The column of fire went before the sons of Israel through the Red Sea so that they could follow on their brave journey; the column went first through the waters to prepare a path for those who followed ... But Christ the Lord does all these things: in the column of fire, He went through the sea before the sons of Israel; so now in the column of his body he goes through baptism before the Christian people... At the time of the Exodus the column...made a pathway through the waters; now it strengthens the footsteps of faith in the bath of baptism.” (*de sancta Epiphania* 1.3)

Monsignor also highlights four gifts that Christ’s baptism bequeathed to men:

- 1) **access** — the heavens open above Christ; and, with our own baptism, heaven is open for us, and original sin is removed from our souls, sanctifying grace with the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity infused, and we are free as children of God.
- 2) **anointing** — at our baptism we, too, receive the Holy Ghost, the “Spirit of the Anointed One” becoming in body and soul His temples.
- 3) **acknowledgement** from the Father as adopted sons — “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:26).
- 4) **approval** — with the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace. Imagine this, when God sees His grace, that is His image in our souls, He can say to us also, imperfect as we are, “In you I am well pleased.”

Saint Augustine, and other fathers, marvel at the humility of the Savior in choosing such an accessible and abundant element as water to be His incarnational

instrument in the work of salvation. And lest any adult should be reluctant to submit to such a simple and childlike ritual as baptism, the Son of God Himself vouchsafed to set the example first. Furthermore, it was befitting that He, the Head of the Mystical Body, who would call His members to baptism, should have been baptized Himself. Thus, in all things He could say in truth to His disciples "Follow Me."

"Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart." Much the same as when Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles at the Last Supper, He bids His disciples to imitate Him as a servant. The baptism of Saint John could produce no effect interiorly on the Just One, who had no sin, but as an example to all He suffered it to be so.

One question that could be asked by way of a clarification concerning the effect baptism had on the soul of Christ is this:

Since Jesus was the Son of God by nature, and the Author of grace by being the All Holy One, the Source of all grace, and since He had no sin, nor could He sin, could baptism do anything to His soul upon receiving it?

Answer: No.

One more question. Did Jesus receive the character of baptism, the indelible mark on His human soul, when He instituted the sacrament with His own baptism?

Answer: No. One could say that the image and likeness of Jesus in His incarnation *is* the Character itself of baptism, as it is the character of Holy Orders in the sacrament of Christ's priesthood. The first thing Saint Paul says of Christ in his Epistle to the Hebrews is that He is the "brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance." The inspired Greek word that Saint Paul used for "figure" was *karacter* (character), which means "seal." Christ being the "character" or "seal" of the Father, He needs no further seal. Our baptismal character is, rather, a conformity to Him. The human nature, therefore, of Christ is the "brightness" of God's glory and the character, the seal, the "figure of [God's] substance." To put it in the poetic language of Father Feeney: "God became man to show men what God looks like."

Finally, I will add a final word of wisdom from Father Feeney concerning the humility of Christ in having Saint John publicly baptize Him. Let us first take a look at the text in the Gospel of Saint Matthew:

“As John the Baptist was baptizing Jesus, John said to Him, ‘I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?’ Then Jesus said, ‘Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice’” (Matt. 3:14,15).

Father Feeney: Unfulfilled justice is the state of justification. Fulfilled justice is the state of salvation. What Jesus is saying to us, at His own baptism by John in the River Jordan, is that justification is now being turned into salvation with the aid of water. Jesus goes so far as to praise and belittle John the Baptist in terms of this very rite of Baptism. He says of John the Baptist, “Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is the lesser in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.” (Matt. 11:11.) John the Baptist’s greatness came not from being born in the state of justification. It came from being admitted into the Kingdom of Christ in salvation. If Jesus was baptized with water to fulfill all justice, how shall we have justice fulfilled in us without Baptism of Water?” (*Bread of Life*, chapter 7)

Source: catholicism.org