

# **First Sunday after the Epiphany: The Baptism of our Lord**

**January 10, 2021**

Year B RCL

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Mark 1:4-11

**“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**

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How are you keeping with your baptismal covenant? When is the last time you intentionally behaved as a baptized Christian?

These questions deserve our attention today especially since we are celebrating the Baptism of the Lord and reflecting on our own baptism. The gospel mentions how during the moment of Jesus' baptism, “A voice came from heaven, (saying) “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” That voice with clear and concise language and message is the voice of God speaking about and to Jesus.

It is worth mentioning that what the Father Almighty said about Jesus his Son, is also what he says about each son and daughter that are part of his creation. Remember when God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our

likeness” in Genesis (1:26), the image God refers to is the image of his Son, Jesus. Therefore, in each human being man and woman, the Voice of God is always the same, “with you I am well pleased.” We all are part of the Beloved when we belong to Christ through our baptism.

The baptism with water and the Holy Spirit that we have received is an expression of the growing love God has for each of us. We learn of the baptism of Jesus in the gospel as the moment when officially the Son of God, who had become flesh, is ready to start his public ministry. The intervention and support of the Father and the Holy Spirit underscores that Jesus is not alone on his path of obedience that will lead him to the cross and eventually return to eternal glory. At all times Jesus is sustained and supported by the grace of God. But He, like every human being and even more so every Christian, must travel in a personal and unique way the path of submission and commitment to the mission that God has entrusted to each person.

It is in that mission of salvation where the baptismal growth is needed for every Christian. Each person that has received the sacrament of baptism is anointed with oil which symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit living inside the new believer and supporting all choices and moments in the life of the person. It is from God that a person receives all he or she needs to fully

develop all capacities so to reach the potential of their humanity. What is needed to achieve completeness depends on each person's response in corresponding to the invitation from God.

What makes a Christian is not only the act of baptism. Many have been baptized and not for this they live as Christians, each decision or situation in their lives is faced with pagan mentality and actions. It is obvious that some are only nominal or cultural Christians, this is not new among followers of Christ. After the conversion of the Roman Empire to the profession of the Christian faith, numerous amounts of people entered the church and received the Sacrament of Baptism, but not all persevere to know and commit with the humble Jesus of the gospel.

It is the same today; many consider themselves as Christians. Some have received the Sacrament of Baptism and other sacramental rites, some participate in church activities, and support financially their church. Perhaps all of them do good things, but when we look at the covenant that was made the day of their baptism, it is possible to discover that to grow in Christ, much more is needed than to be a good person or to do good things. Sometimes,

there are many individuals who are not Christians that do much more or are better people than those who call themselves Christians.

What makes a Christian is the individual personal commitment the person has with Jesus and their capacity to embrace the cross and live each day serving and loving others. A Christian strives to live the baptismal covenant knowing that the Christian life is an ongoing process that never ends bringing us to eternal life. A Christian understands that they are a member of the Body of Christ who is on call 24/7, not only for an hour on Sundays or on special occasions like Easter or Christmas. A Christian will commit financially in a pledge or promise that reflects a stewardship tithe with generosity of all he or she has to live following the example of the poor widow's offering of the gospel (Mk 12:41-44) and not of what remains as leftovers.

When a person is unaware and unmindful of the need to grow in Christ, it is possible to remain immature in the faith. One of the tragedies we experience is that many believers do not grow in their baptism call; they are baptized and remain children in their faith. They believe like children and act like infants, their morality, honesty, service, and love is childish; and some are selfish that they love only themselves. It is possible to find these infant Christians

everywhere, some are even serving in ministries throughout the world. The infant Christians make of Christianity a place of confusion, a place where personal interest takes precedent over everything or anyone else.

How are you keeping with your baptismal covenant? When is the last time you intentionally behaved as a baptized Christian?

If you are growing in your baptismal covenant, you have experienced the pain and the discomfort of what it is to be a follower of Christ in a pagan society. You have discovered how difficult it is to live obediently to the gospel. You like Peter have learned to cry bitterly, often for the many times you deny Jesus with your sins and actions. If you are growing in Christ, you are not afraid of committing your time and your financial wealth, because you understand that all belongs to Him. When you are growing in Christ, the Holy Spirit supports your life to become a witness of God and you want to learn more about spiritual realities knowing that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit. When you are growing in your baptismal covenant, you want to be a faithful servant that imitates Jesus washing the disciples' feet everywhere you go. When you are in Christ, you embrace the cross in all circumstances and express your Christian identity with the justice, mercy, respect, kindness, honesty, and inclusion you treat others.

Do not be disappointed if you are not this Christian person yet. If you lack some of the characteristics that I have mentioned about those who are true followers of Christ, do your best to work towards attaining them. The transformation into a new creation is a process and will start happening when you recognize that God needs space to grow inside you. The baptismal covenant is always an open invitation, an opportunity to become a better person in Jesus. As we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, be grateful of your own baptism, your parents, sponsors, and the circumstances of your baptismal life; and embrace the Baptismal Covenant as your own. Day by day receive the gift of being born again in the Holy Spirit; and try your best to live here and now, the love bestowed upon you remembering God calls you, beloved. Amen.