

THIS WEEK,, WE SOLEMNLY CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF:

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD!

FOR TWO WEEKS,, WE'VE CELEBRATED JESUS AS AN INFANT. THIS WEEK,, WE BEGIN TO CELEBRATE JESUS AS AN ADULT,, AS WE SEE JESUS MAKING HIS FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE,, AS AN ADULT,, AT HIS BAPTISM,, IN THE JORDAN RIVER,, BY JOHN THE BAPTIST.

DID YOU EVER WONDER,, WHY JESUS ASKED JOHN TO BAPTIZE HIM? JESUS DIDN'T HAVE ANY SINS TO BE CLEANSED OF,, SO,, HE DIDN'T NEED TO REPENT,, OR EVEN TO BE BAPTIZED!

WHEN SINNERS WENT TO JOHN THE BAPTIST,, THEY WENT TO HIM,, FOR THE REPENTANCE OF THEIR SINS.

THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR SINFULNESS AND THEIR BAPTISM INDICATED THEIR DESIRE,, TO TURN OVER A NEW LEAF,, IN THEIR LIVES,, AND THEIR COMMITMENT,, TO LEAVE THEIR SINFUL LIVES BEHIND THEM.

BUT JESUS,, ALTHOUGH LIKE US IN EVERY WAY,, WAS WITHOUT SIN. SO,, HE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE BAPTIZED. THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY,, IN THE WORLD,, A MINISTRY THAT CONTINUES TO THIS DAY.

JESUS' BAPTISM,, WAS,, A SIGN OF HIS MINISTRY AMONG US,, AND OUR BAPTISM,, IS A SIGN OF OUR MINISTRY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN CHRIST'S CHURCH,, IN THIS WORLD!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, BAPTISM ISN'T AN INSURANCE POLICY TO HEAVEN,, BUT,, IT IS OUR BOARDING PASS,, TO A LIFE TIME WITH OUR LORD AND SAVIOR,, JESUS CHRIST!

BAPTISM,, BEGINS A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS! A RELATIONSHIP,, THAT NEEDS TO BE NOURISHED,, STRENGTHENED,, DEVELOPED AND KEPT ALIVE.

THIS WEEKEND,, ENDS THE CATHOLIC CHURCHES LITURGICAL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.

BY NOW,, MOST OF US HAVE PROBABLY PUT AWAY OUR CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

AFTER LOOKING AT MY DECORATION FREE HOUSE,, I GOT TO THINKING ABOUT ALL THE PEOPLE THAT I HEARD,, COMPLAINING ABOUT THE STRESS OF THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON,, AND HOW EASILY,, THEY SEEMED TO “*ENTER BACK*” INTO THEIR “*NORMAL LIFE*”,, A LIFE FILLED WITH EVEN MORE AND MORE STRESS.

I WONDER IF THEY ACTUALLY TOOK ANY TIME,, TO FIND *THE JOY AND PEACE OF THE REASON FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON* AT ALL,, WHICH ONLY THE BIRTH OF CHRIST CAN BRING!

THIS WEEKEND,, WE REJOICE AT THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR,, JESUS CHRIST. HIS BAPTISM,, HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF JESUS BEING BAPTIZED,, BY HIS COUSIN,, JOHN THE BAPTIST,, IN THE JORDAN RIVER.

SCRIPTURE SAYS THAT JESUS WAS BAPTIZED WITH WATER SO THAT HE MAY BAPTIZE US,, IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. IT’S THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT JESUS GIVES US,, THAT MAKES US;

PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE OF GOD!

THE CHURCH,, IN THEOLOGICAL TERMS,, REFERS TO THE *BAPTISM OF THE LORD* AS “*THE THEOPHANY*”,, BECAUSE; AT JESUS’ BAPTISM,, GOD APPEARED IN THREE PERSONS;

FIRST: AS JESUS THE SON,,

SECOND: AS THE HOLY SPIRIT,, A DESCENDING DOVE,, AND

THIRD: GOD THE FATHER,, SPEAKING FROM THE CLOUDS

JOHN,, THROUGH HOLY BAPTISM,, PREPARED MEN TO CONFESS THEIR SINS.

WHEN WE RECALL,, THE SAVING GRACE,, OF OUR OWN BAPTISMS,, WE FIND THE COURAGE TO CONFESS OUR SINS AND EVEN MORE,, WE GAIN THE KNOWLEDGE,, THAT ***THROUGH THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS,, OUR SINS HAVE BEEN CLEANSED AWAY!***

NO,, JESUS DIDN'T NEED TO BE BAPTIZED! HE IS THE SON OF GOD! ALTHOUGH HE TOOK THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR FLESH,, AND WAS RECOGNIZED,, OUTWARDLY,, JUST LIKE ONE OF US,, HE WAS ABSOLUTELY "**SINLESS**"!

THIS WEEKEND,, OUR CELEBRATION,, IS ABOUT JESUS BEING BAPTIZED BY JOHN THE BAPTIST,, AND WHAT THAT BAPTISM HAS TO OFFER US.

SO,, LET'S TAKE A LOOK,, AT JOHN THE BAPTIST!

AS CHRISTIANS,, CAN WE FIND ANYTHING IN JOHN THAT WOULD HELP US BECOME STRONGER CHRISTIANS?

HOW ABOUT HUMILITY! JOHN WAS HUMBLE!

AS WE HEARD,, IN OUR SCRIPTURE READING,, THE PEOPLE WERE WONDERING IF JOHN HIMSELF,, WAS THE MESSIAH.

CAN YOU IMAGINE GOING OUT INTO YOUR COMMUNITY AND **PRACTICING SUCH A FAITHFUL LIFE OF HUMILITY**,, AS JOHN'S? OR,, **HAVING SUCH A LOVE OF HEART,, WITHIN YOU,, THAT YOU'D BE ABLE TO PREACH SUCH MOVING WORDS OF TRUTH AS JOHN'S WERE?**,, SO MUCH SO,, THAT PEOPLE AROUND YOU,, **WOULD MISTAKE YOU FOR THE MESSIAH?** **CAN YOU JUST IMAGINE THAT?**

THIS HAPPENED TO JOHN THE BAPTIST,, BUT HE HUMBLED HIMSELF,, BY CLAIMING,, THAT THE ONE TO COME,, IS MIGHTIER,, AND THAT HE IS NOT EVEN WORTHY ENOUGH TO UNDO HIS SANDAL STRAPS. JOHN MADE THAT POINT TO EMPHASIZE THE GREATNESS OF JESUS,, BY LOWERING HIMSELF.

THINK ABOUT THAT! HOW TRULY **CHRIST-CENTERED** WE COULD BE,,, IF WE'D ONLY HUMBLE OURSELVES,,, TO JESUS AS LORD,,, AND SEEK HIS WILL IN ALL THINGS,,, AS WE SEEK A BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,,, EACH MORNING,,, WHEN WE WAKE UP

THEN,,, WE MUST PRACTICE THAT HUMILITY,,, WITH THOSE WHO WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH,,, ON A DAILY BASIS.

LIKE; **THE LOUD-MOUTHED CO-WORKER**,,, **THE UNHAPPY FAMILY MEMBER**,,, **THE IRRITATING NEIGHBOR**,,, OR,,, **THE ENEMIES**,,, OF OUR PAST,,, AND PRESENT,,, *CAN WE EVER FIND ENOUGH COURAGE,,, IN THE LORD,,, TO LOWER OURSELVES,,, TO THOSE WHO DON'T LIKE US,,, OR TO THOSE,,, WHO THINK THAT WE ARE CRAZY,,, BECAUSE OF THE FAITH THAT WE PRACTICE?*

WHEN CONFRONTED WITH EACH OTHER,,, IN THIS HOLY SANCTUARY,,, BY THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED; *IS OUR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS STRONG ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY HUMBLE OURSELVES IN THEIR PRESENCE AND TRULY HELP THEM?*

SO,,, YOU MAY BE ASKING: “**WHAT IS HUMILITY?**” “DOES IT MEAN THAT I HAVE TO BE **A CHRISTIAN WIMP?**”

NO,,, IT DOESN'T! SCRIPTURE REMINDS US,,, THAT MOSES WAS THE MOST HUMBLED MAN ON EARTH,,, BUT,,, HE WAS NO PUSH OVER,,, AND CERTAINLY,,, “NO WIMP”!

HUMILITY,,, IS RECOGNIZING OUR UNWORTHINESS,,, BEFORE GOD AND OUR NEED FOR A SAVIOR!

THIS SPECIAL CELEBRATION FEAST,,, ALLOWS US TO RECALL OUR OWN BAPTISM AND THE EVENTS WHICH HAPPENED AT OUR OWN BAPTISM.

AT THE BAPTISM OF JESUS,,, THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED UPON HIM:

AT OUR BAPTISM,,, THE HOLY TRINITY TOOK IT'S PLACE IN OUR SOUL.

AT CHRIST'S BAPTISM,,, GOD HIMSELF,, PROCLAIMED
“*THIS IS MY BELOVED SON,, WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!*”

AT OUR BAPTISM,,, WE BECAME,, ADOPTED SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD THE FATHER,, WHO HE LOVES SO VERY MUCH,, AND WITH WHOM HE IS PLEASED,, HAVING CREATED US,, IN HIS OWN IMAGE.

IN LIVING OUT THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM,, WE HAVE DIED TO SIN,, AND THE WATER BECOMES

GRACE-FILLED WATER OF LIFE,,, AND,,

A “*BATH OF THE NEW BIRTH,, IN THE HOLY SPIRIT*”

*BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, YOU AND I HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED
IN CHRIST!*

AND THIS HAS OPENED THE DOOR OF OUR HEART AND WE ARE NOW THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

UNFORTUNATELY,, SOME DOORS HAVE REMAINED LOCKED,, AS SOME PEOPLE HAVE REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE THE HIDDEN THINGS,, THAT THEY NEED TO DO,, IN ORDER TO SURRENDER TO HUMILITY,, SO THAT THEY ALSO CAN CELEBRATE THE FULLNESS OF NEW LIFE THROUGH THE BAPTISM,, OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IT IS THROUGH OUR BAPTISM,,, THAT WE ARE BROUGHT TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS,, LOVING AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER.

IT IS THROUGH OUR BAPTISM,,, CALLING US TO COME FORWARD TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD,, RECEIVING THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST,, AND FINDING THE COURAGE TO TAKE THE LORD'S LOVE INTO A BROKEN WORLD.

IT IS THROUGH OUR BAPTISM,,, THAT WHEN OUR JOURNEY IN THIS WORLD HAS ENDED,, WE WILL REST AND REJOICE IN GOD'S PRESENCE.

AND,, IT IS THROUGH THE WATERS OF BAPTISM,, THAT *THE OLD CREATURE IN US,, WITH ALL IT'S SIN AND EVIL DESIRES,, IS CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST,, BURIED AND RAISED UP,, IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST THROUGH REPENTANCE.*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, LET US ALWAYS REMEMBER THE WORDS OF ST. PAUL,, TO THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS,, AS HE SO BEAUTIFULLY DECLARES:

“*BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS,, BEFORE HIM,, IN LOVE!*”

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

AMEN

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(1,287 WDS 6 PGS)