

Baptism of the Lord

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This beautiful feast marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. In the Gospel of Matthew, we see Jesus standing on the banks of the Jordan River. He is not there because He needs to be cleansed from sin, for He is the sinless Son of God. Rather, He is there to begin His mission of love and salvation for each one of us.

The first thing we notice in today's Gospel is the incredible humility of Jesus. When Jesus approaches John the Baptist, John is hesitant. He knows that Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John says, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" John recognizes the greatness of Christ and his own unworthiness. However, Jesus insists, saying it is necessary "to fulfill all righteousness." By choosing to be baptized by John, the King of Kings places Himself in line with the lowly, the broken, and the repentant. He does not set Himself apart in a palace; He stands in the muddy waters of the Jordan. This act of humility shows us that God does not look down on us from a distance. Instead, He enters into our reality, walks our path, and carries our burdens.

Why would the Son of God receive a baptism of repentance? It is because Jesus identified Himself with sinners. By entering the water, Jesus was not being washed clean; rather, He was sanctifying the water for us. He took upon Himself the weight of our humanity. He stood in that line of sinners to show that He is "God with us." As the Prophet Isaiah tells us in the first reading, God's servant does not cry out or shout in the streets. He is gentle. He does not break the bruised reed or quench the smoldering wick. Jesus' baptism is the first public sign that He has come to heal what is broken in us. He knows our struggles, our temptations, and our failures. By identifying with us at the Jordan, He prepares the way for Him to identify with us on the Cross.

This humility was not just a nice gesture; it was the key to fulfilling God's plan. Because Jesus was humble and obedient, the heavens were opened. We hear the voice of the Father saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." The Holy Spirit descends like a dove, anointing Jesus for His mission. St. Peter reminds us in the Acts of the Apostles that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power, and He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil. It was Jesus' total surrender to the Father's will—starting at His

baptism—that allowed the plan of redemption to move forward. Without this humble beginning, there would be no Gospel, no miracles, and no Resurrection.

Finally, we must ask ourselves: what does this mean for us today? Our own Baptism is our gateway to Jesus and to Heaven. When we were baptized, we were not just washed with water; we were claimed by God. We became His adopted children. Just as the Father spoke over Jesus, He speaks over each of you today: "You are my beloved child." Our Baptism gives us a "spiritual identity" that the world cannot take away. It links us directly to the life of Christ. Through the grace of this Sacrament, we are given the strength to turn away from sin and to live lives of holiness. It is our "passport" to the Kingdom of God. However, Baptism is not just a past event; it is a daily calling. Every day, we are called to live out our baptismal promises by choosing light over darkness and love over selfishness.

As we celebrate this feast, let us renew our gratitude for the gift of our Baptism. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to be humble like Him, to serve others with a gentle heart, and to always remember that we belong to God. By following the path of Jesus, we can be confident that we are walking toward our true home in Heaven.