

Homily for the Baptism of the Lord Year A

A story is about an old grandfather who walked into a flower shop to buy a beautiful corsage. He said, *“I want to buy a beautiful corsage, not a big one, but just about the prettiest one you can make”*. He smiled, *“It’s for my granddaughter and she’s having her first date tomorrow.”*

The owner was so amused and asked the grandfather, *“How old is your granddaughter?”*. The excited grandfather replied, *“More than two weeks”*.

Again, the owner was surprised and asked, *“Did you say a date...a corsage...two weeks old?”*. The old man said, *“Precisely yes!”* *“And I want it a corsage that’s exactly right. She’ll never have a more important date than she has tomorrow because it’s her first date with God. My little granddaughter is getting baptized tomorrow.”*

This beautiful story highlights how precious and important **the Sacrament of Baptism truly is**. The grandfather wants the *prettiest* corsage because he understands something many people forget, that is **Baptism is the most important “date” of a person’s life, their first encounter with God**. It is a **sacred meeting** between God and the child. It is the moment when a person is welcomed into God’s family. It is the beginning of a lifelong relationship with God. It is a celebration of new life, joy, and grace.

The 13th century king of France, St. Louis IX (1226-70), insisted that the grand celebration of his birthday should be held on the day of his baptism, and not on his birthday proper. His argument was that baptism was the beginning of a life that would continue for eternity in the everlasting glory of heaven.

Pope John Paul II was once asked what was the most important day in his life. Do you know what he said? He didn’t say being ordained, he didn’t say being made a bishop or even being made Pope: he said, *‘The day of my baptism was the greatest day of my life.’*

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Lord’s Baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. Jesus is the sinless One. Jesus is God. So why would He come to the Jordan River and stand in line with sinners? Why would the Holy One step into the same water used for repentance? The Church gives us beautiful answers.

Jesus is baptized to stand with sinners:

Jesus stands with the broken, the guilty, the confused, and the lost. He chooses to be counted among sinners. This is the heart of the Gospel: God does not save us from a distance. By stepping into the Jordan, Jesus says, “I am with you. You are not alone.”

Jesus is baptized to reveal the Trinity:

The baptism scene is one of the clearest revelations of the Trinity in Scripture: The Son stands in the water. The Spirit descends like a dove. The Father says: “***This is my beloved Son.***” It reveals God not as a distant being, but as a communion of love.

The Beginning of Jesus’ Public Ministry

The baptism is His commissioning for mission. Just as kings, prophets, and priests were anointed, Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit. From this moment, He begins proclaiming the Kingdom, healing, teaching, and calling disciples.

Jesus Sanctifies the Waters for Our Baptism

The early Fathers said, “***Jesus did not need the waters; the waters needed Jesus.***” When Jesus goes into the Jordan, He does not get cleansed, He cleanses the waters. By entering the water, **He transforms baptism into a sacrament that brings new life. Our baptism becomes a share in His death and resurrection, making us children of God.**

As we celebrate the Feast of Baptism, First, we need to remember **who we are** and **Whose we are**. Through our Baptism, we have become the beloved sons and daughters of God, filled with the Holy Spirit and sent to bring Christ’s love into the world. *St. John Chrysostom*, Through Baptism, we “become children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Secondly, Jesus received the Holy Spirit at His baptism. We too are filled with the Spirit. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to guide our decisions, strengthen our courage, and comfort us in our weaknesses.

Thirdly, Just as Jesus stepped into the waters, God steps into our lives every day. We need to trust His presence, especially in moments of fear, doubt, pain or struggle. May God bless all of us. Amen.