



Catechetical Corner

The Baptism of the Lord

Feast—January 9



Jesus fulfilled all the precepts of Jewish religious law perfectly, including the required rituals of purification and atonement. So when John the Baptist preached a “baptism of repentance,” Jesus went to receive Baptism from him not because he needed to repent but “to fulfill all righteousness.” In the moment that Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down upon him, and the Father spoke from the heavens that he was well pleased with his beloved Son.

By this example, Jesus modeled the simple path through which all people who are baptized become sons and daughters of God. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the waters of Baptism cleanse a person from all sin and restore his or her relationship with God to its original holiness. Baptism, therefore, transforms one’s identity.

Baptism also gives a new purpose to a person’s life—being washed in water and renewed by the Holy Spirit, they are joined into the Kingdom of God and given the mission to increase the Kingdom in their lives. Just as Jesus began his public ministry after receiving Baptism, so too are the new children of God commissioned to spread the Good News to all, beginning first with the transformation of their own lives, and then spreading and sharing that joy with others, so as to bring all things under the authority of the Kingdom of God.

Just before his Ascension, Jesus renewed the meaning of Baptism as an entrance to discipleship and even prescribed how it should be administered to others: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).



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