

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Today's feast concludes the Christmas season and brings us into the ordinary time of the year. The feast of the baptism of Jesus presents a very important point in the life of Jesus, a very important turning point. As we reflect on what is happening here in the life of Jesus, it is important for us to connect it with our own lives, with our baptism and what that means for each one of us.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. It was a baptism that Jesus did not need because he had no need of repentance. The point about John's baptism was that people who were conscious of their sins came forward to confess them. They made that confession precisely by submitting themselves to the rite of baptism. That is to say, the baptism itself was a public admission of sinfulness and the need for God's forgiveness.

Now, Jesus the Son of God was without sin. The letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus has been put to test in exactly the same way as ourselves, but he did not sin. (Heb. 4:15) Peter says that he had done nothing wrong and had spoken no deceit (1Pet. 2:22). John the Baptist himself was surprised that Jesus would come for baptism, since he had no need of it, that was why he tried to dissuade him. But Jesus told him to go ahead and baptize him. We may ask why?

Why did Jesus submit himself to a rite he clearly did not need? Jesus' reason was to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus' submission to John's Baptism was part of God's plan, so that Jesus would be manifested as the Servant of God, now about to embark upon his mission. Jesus' baptism by John is the occasion for his special anointing as the Messiah. After his Baptism a new era will begin.

As the baptism of Jesus made it clear that he was anointed by God, through the Holy Spirit, so, too at our own baptism we were given a new life and anointed in the Holy Spirit. This enables us to live and love as God's beloved sons and daughters and to carry on the saving mission of Jesus.

Today's feast and the renewal of our baptismal promises every Easter are so important. They can help us to remember and recommit ourselves to living out our Baptismal promises we made on the day we were baptized. Through baptism, we were given a new life in Christ, made members of the Church and given the Holy Spirit.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, today we need to reflect and ask ourselves how faithful we have been to our baptismal promises. Are we still new creations on the path to righteousness? Today's feast is encouraging us to imitate Jesus who after his baptism remained obedient to his father even unto death.

As we celebrate this feast today, let us pray that the good Lord will give us the grace, to always understand and cherish our privileged status: That by virtue of our baptism, we are a people

cleansed from original sin, endowed with sanctifying grace, made children of God, members of the Church and heirs with Christ to the Kingdom of God.