

The Baptism of the Lord 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, there is a fundamental question and a basic problem with today's Gospel and today's feast day and St. Matthew and St. Mark are very conscious of this problem: Why does the sinless one enter into a Baptism of Repentance when He has no need of repentance, because He is the Holy One of God?

From the very beginnings of the Church, this Sunday has always been one of the Epiphanies of the Lord: The Visitation of the Magi, The Baptism of the Lord and the Wedding Feast of Cana. The word, Epiphany means a manifestation of the Divine. Therefore, the Church has always considered this to be one of the major ways in which God in Jesus is revealing His true nature: both God and man! But, we still cannot escape the question: Why was Jesus baptized?

The purpose of Jesus' baptism is revealed in the very short response of Jesus to John's own question: "Thus, it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." What this means is revealed in the first reading from Isaiah: "I have called you in righteousness...", in other words to fulfill the purpose of God's promises in Salvation History. Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's promises! The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, is His inauguration of the plan and promises of God in three ways:

First, God has not come as the God of vengeance with the sword; rather, God in Jesus has come to identify with the sinner, although not with their sinfulness. When Jesus enters into the waters of repentance, He brings all of humanity into the waters of repentance to be washed clean by Him. This will be fully manifest as the soldier pierces the heart of Jesus from which pours forth a river of His Divine Life in His Blood and Water! When you and I were baptized, we were immersed into the waters of the Divine Life, and restored to the Divine Life lost by Adam and Eve.

Second, Jesus brings all of humanity into a new relationship with God lost by sin. He reveals in His person the deepest longing of our souls, to see God. However, in Jesus, and His Baptism, we not only see the Divine Nature of God, His epiphany,

we also see the deepest mystery of God revealed to us: God is Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but, One God. God reveals Himself to us in Jesus, Who God really is in His very Being. Thus God invites us into the very intimacy of the Divine Relationship of the One True God, In Jesus, in our Baptisms, we are made one and are privileged to hear what Jesus heard: “This is my beloved Son!”

Thirdly, it is not enough for God to reveal the very mystery of God to us, He pours out the very life of the mystery of God into us in our Baptism. Thus, St. Catherine of Sienna heard God the Father say to her: “Catherine, don’t you know that I am more intimate to you than you are to yourself!” This is the mystery of the Eucharist as well: we who are Baptized, are now made One with the One whom we receive in His Body and His Blood; and this began in our Baptisms.