



This weekend we close the Christmas Season with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. I think we all need to write to the Pope and get him to extend Christmas a little longer, don't you? [I'm kidding ... I think] In our Catechism we read that Jesus' baptism was "on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant" (#536). Jesus was fully aware of the symbolic meaning of his own baptism: as He was willingly submerged in water, so one day he would willingly be submerged

in suffering and death to atone for our sins, and he would rise from the waters of death in His human body and thus bring new life, eternal life, to all who would listen to His voice and follow Him with gratitude, love, and devotion.

As we celebrate Jesus' baptism, we cannot help but remember the significance of our own baptism which is intimately associated with His. We learn from the Catechism:

Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and "walk in newness of life" (Rm 6:4). [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 537]

St. Paul in the Bible teaches:

"You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12, NAB)

"We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

When we were baptized, we were literally touched by God and received an indelible mark upon our souls: we died with Christ and rose with Him; we were reborn into the life of God. What does this mean? Simply put, only by living for and with Christ can we find true peace, joy, love, and fulfillment. We have been ordained, ordered, to God; we have been inaugurated into the ultimate mission: to live in a loving union with the one true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus (Rm 8:29). Our success, our fulfillment, as human beings will be measured by the degree of our union with God. St. Paul teaches us

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. ... For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them." (Ephesians 1:3–6; 2:10)

As we begin the new year, we pray for the grace to live faithfully the precious life of grace we have been given, and to know the joy and peace that only God can give. HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Your Servant in Christ,
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