

BAPTISM of the LORD

Dear Friends,

The story about the birth of Jesus is in two Gospels - Matthew and Luke. However, the story about the baptism of the Lord can be found in all four Gospels. Today's celebration of the Baptism of the Lord concludes the Christmas season. As always, the focus of our celebration is on Jesus, the Christ. In this Sunday's gospel passage from Mark we hear John the Baptist declaring, "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." After Jesus is baptized, "the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'."

Celebrating the Lord's baptism brings to mind our own baptism. As those life-giving waters are poured and the words pronounced - "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" - we become united with Jesus the Christ. We become one with him and each other, as brothers and sisters. That union with Jesus makes us adopted sons and daughters of God. Jesus is the source of our adoption. Through him we become children of God. Do we really comprehend the dignity that we receive through the sacrament of baptism? We need to stop and think about it - what does it mean to be a child of God? Apostle Paul says, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him." (Rom 8:16-17)

Besides "privileges" baptism also gives us "responsibilities". During the Christmas season many of our readings at Mass presented Jesus as Light: the "light shining in the darkness." During the rite of baptism, a candle is lit from the paschal candle for the person being baptized. When parents receive this candle on behalf of their infant child, the celebrant says, "Receive the light of Christ," then adds, "Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. Your child has been enlightened by Christ. He/she is to walk always as a child of the light. May they keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts. When the Lord comes, may they go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom." We are to keep the light of Christ burning brightly in our World.

The New Year has just begun and it appears that people are losing hope and the joy of life. The world around us is focusing on darkness. We as Christians are to bring light and hope into the world. The hope that comes from Christ. When we focus as Jesus did on the salvation of souls we are able to live joyfully and bring the light of Christ to the world. As the Letter to the Hebrews (11:1) says, "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen".

In Christ,
Fr. Krzysztof