FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

**THEME:** THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
**READINGS:** Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7/ Acts 10:34-38/ Matthew 3:13-17

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We sometimes wonder why Jesus Christ (Divine and sinless) had to go in for the baptism (by John the Baptist) which was meant for repentance.  In fact, John himself initially resisted baptizing Jesus (Matt. 3:14).  With the assistance of some Saints, then, let us reflect on why our Lord was baptized.

**The baptism of Jesus Christ became a moment of revelation**.  First and foremost he entered the Jordan to be baptized so as to be revealed as the ***Lamb of God*** who takes away the sin of the world. This, the Baptist himself would testify: ‘There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world…. I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing to prepare for him, so that he might be revealed in Israel…’ (John 1:29-34). ***May Jesus, the Lamb of God, cleanse us of every sin we confess, amen!***

Secondly, then, the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan revealed him as the ***Messiah of Israel and the Son of God.*** Messiah (or Christ) means the Anointed One, and Jesus, as St. Peter proclaimed to Cornelius and his household, was Anointed at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and power (cf. Acts 10:37-38).  In addition, Jesus Christ was revealed not as a mere ‘man of God’ (as we may refer to a prophet or saint), but as the Son, the Only Begotten One of God (John 1:18).  This is very clear in the heavenly voice of the Father: ‘This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Matt. 3:17).  ***May all baptized persons, through Christ, remain forever cherished children of God, amen!***

Thirdly, St. Ambrose says that our Lord was baptized not ***that he might be cleansed by the waters***, but rather to cleanse the waters, so that they might possess the power of baptism. Thus, Christ leaves the waters sanctified for the baptism of those who would come to believe in him. ***May we, who have been baptized, continue to enjoy the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, amen!***

Fourthly, Christ’s baptism announces the beginning of his public ministry. For about 30 years (Luke 3:23) he was waiting for the right time to begin his ministry in order to bring his mission to its ultimate end; and Jesus saw John’s ministry as an indication for the beginning of his own ministry.  The Father’s voice gave approval to Christ’s decision and the Spirit strengthened him for the task ahead. ***May we always seek and receive God’s approval for all our good plans and endeavours, amen!***

Fifthly, let us listen to St. Chrysostom: Christ indeed had already manifested himself at his birth by many signs, but people would not consult them. So he, who had in the meantime remained private, revealed himself more clearly in a second birth (the baptism). For formerly a star in the heavens, but now the Father at the waves of Jordan declared him, as the Holy Spirit descended upon him, pouring forth that voice over the head of him who was baptized.  Christ was revealed firstly by a star and secondly by a dove and a voice; so ***may the things, persons and events we encounter everyday reveal ever more to us the goodness and saving power of God, amen!***

Finally, St. Ambrose says that Jesus, being a wise Master, does not teach only by words but also by practice:

* To teach humility and service, he washed the feet of his apostles;
* To teach the greatest act of love; he died on the cross.
* And so, to teach his apostles to go out and baptize, he accepted to be baptized.

***So, beloved may our actions preach the Gospel louder than our words! Amen!***