

**BAPTISM OF THE LORD; Cycle – A; Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> 2026**  
**Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7; Acts 10: 34-38; Matthew 3: 13-17**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

According to Luke the first manifestation of Jesus took place in the small circle, to the shepherds. But according to Matthew the first manifestation is granted to the magi or the wise men from the East who were gentiles. If we go back to Luke we see the revelation of Infant Jesus to Simeon and Anna in the Temple. So far we have been focusing on Infant Jesus; whereas today the Church presents an adult Jesus. The Baptism of Jesus is considered to be his manifestation to the public where he fully revealed his identity as the **Second Person of the Trinitarian God**. It is at the Baptism of Jesus, for the first time, God is revealed as **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. As Jesus stands in the Jordan River being baptized by John, it is said that the heavens were opened for him, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove and the voice of God was heard as: *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* Throughout his public ministry Jesus remained to be the beloved Son of God. In John's gospel Jesus repeatedly speaks about his union with the Father. *And also the Baptism marks Jesus' public ministry.*

Catholic Church teaches that all seven Sacraments are instituted by Jesus Christ. In other words, directly or indirectly the Sacraments are connected to the life and teachings of Jesus. First of all, the Sacrament of Baptism has its origin from the Baptism of Jesus. Secondly, in John's gospel chapter 3:5 Jesus says to Nicodemus, **"Amen, amen I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."** Thirdly, the last commandment of Jesus to the Apostles in Matthew 28: 19 was, **"Go therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."** What does baptism mean? The meaning of baptism can be found in the four letters of the word **RICE**. **R** stands for **Rebirth**. In baptism we are born again by water and the Holy Spirit. We are cleansed from original sin and become sons and daughters of God in a special way. **I** stands for **Initiation**. At baptism we are initiated or admitted into full membership in the Church, the community of the children of God in the world. **C** is for **Consecration**. In baptism we consecrate and dedicate ourselves to seek and to spread the kingdom of God. We commit ourselves to be servants of God, to do God's will and serve God with our whole lives. And **E** is for **Empowerment**. At Baptism the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and empowers us, equips us, gives us the moral strength to say no to evil and to live as God's children that we have become.

These four effects of baptism can be divided into two categories, the **passive effects (what we receive from God)**, namely, **rebirth, initiation, consecration and empowerment; and the active effect (what we give to God and the people of God)**, namely, **our commitment and dedication to a cause, to spread the Kingdom of God**. We may wonder why Jesus needed to be baptized. Of course, Jesus didn't need to be born again since he was from all eternity the only begotten child of God. He had no original sin to be cleansed from. Did Jesus need **initiation**? Yes, being human, Jesus needed to associate and to identify with the community of men and women. **Empowerment**: the Holy Spirit is the power of the Most High. The Spirit that descended on Jesus at his Baptism strengthened and empowered him. As we read in the second reading, it was at his Baptism that **"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; [and] he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil"** (Acts 10:37-38). **Consecration**: Baptism for Jesus was a moment of self-

consecration, a moment of self-dedication. For him it was a commitment to do whatever was necessary to promote the cause of the Kingdom of God on earth.

When we look at those four effects of Baptism, we know how serious this Sacrament is. Unfortunately, in the modern age many young parents take Baptism as a mere ritual in which their children have to undergo. But they forget conveniently that they have a sacred duty to bring up their children as the beloved sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father.

The baptism in our life has got threefold purpose. First of all, it was our initiation to the Mystical Body of Christ and by which we became the member of the Community or Church. Secondly our Baptism is the invitation we received from Jesus to become **the disciples of Christ**; it was the inauguration of our life long process by which we want to become one with Christ, in Christ and for Christ. **Baptism is the starting point of our journey with Christ.** We are strengthened during our long pilgrimage by the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Our journey began at the river of Jordan, *the baptismal font*, and finally after a long exodus it takes us to mount Calvary where we die with Jesus and rise with Him.

The third purpose of our Baptism is that, having become the disciple of Christ, we need to work for the spread of the Kingdom of God on earth or preach the gospel. That is for which we are consecrated at our Baptism. Every Christian is a missionary and evangelizer. His/her very life should be a living witness to the gospel of Jesus. What are we doing, each one of us, to promote the Kingdom of God? Are we ready to consecrate and dedicate ourselves wholly to the service of the Kingdom of God just as Jesus did? If not, what are we doing to support those who have consecrated themselves to doing this work in the name of us all? Today, with Jesus let us renew our Baptismal commitment to bear witness to the Good News of the Kingdom of God in word and in actions. If we fail, then our Baptism will have the value of a mere ritual. Unfortunately in the modern world millions remain only in that level.