

The Baptism of the Lord – B
Fr. Chad S. Green
Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church
Sammamish, Washington
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Isaiah 55:1-11
Isaiah 12
Acts 10:34-38
(see John 1:29) Mark 1:7-11

Baptism: Jesus' and Our Mission Is to Save All People

Today is the last day of the Christmas Season—the conclusion of these weeks in which we've been preparing for and then contemplating the *beginning* of Jesus' life here on Earth. And so it's fitting that we conclude this season of *beginnings* by celebrating *another beginning*.

Last Sunday, we celebrated the Epiphany of the Lord, when the child Jesus was *revealed* to the Magi. Today, we celebrate Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan River by John. This is another kind of "Epiphany": when Jesus was *revealed* as the Son of God.¹ And, it's also another *beginning* for Jesus—the *beginning* of His public ministry.²

Furthermore, the truths revealed about Jesus in these celebrations the past two weeks are also important truths revealed about *us*.

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First truth: Jesus came to save *all* people. When Jesus was revealed to the Magi, they came from a distant and foreign land and even a different religion.³ Therefore, in that moment, this important truth was revealed: that Jesus came to draw *all* people to Himself, to welcome *all* people, and to save *all* people.⁴ Perhaps this truth was surprising and unexpected to the people of Jesus' time. And, for us, maybe this truth is not *surprising*, but perhaps it's taken for granted or ignored—or, maybe we simply don't spend enough time reflecting on what it means for us.

Jesus came to save *all* people. People of every nation, every race, every class, and every religion. This truth is so important, so fundamental to our faith. It's critical for us to be reminded of it often, and to discern whether my thoughts and ways are becoming more and more

like God's.⁵ Whether my thoughts, words, actions, and prayers reflect this truth: God desires that all people be saved, and so do we!⁶

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Second truth: Jesus is the Beloved Son of God. When Jesus was Baptized, a voice from Heaven revealed that He is the Beloved Son of God.⁷ What Jesus' Baptism revealed about Jesus—so also Baptism reveals about *us*. At our Baptism, the same things happened (or, if you're discerning or preparing for being Baptized, the same things *will* happen): Heaven was opened for each one of us; the Holy Spirit was given to each one of us; and we were reborn and called beloved children of God.⁸

This, too, would have been surprising to the people of Jesus' time, being called beloved children of God. And, once again, for us, maybe this truth is not *surprising*, but perhaps it's taken for granted or ignored—or, maybe we simply don't spend enough time reflecting on what it means for us.

We are *all* beloved sons and daughters of God. This truth is so important, so fundamental to our faith. It's critical for us to be reminded of it often, and to discern whether my thoughts and ways are becoming more and more like God's. Whether my thoughts, words, actions, and prayers reflect this truth. God desires that we know how much we are loved by Him, and He wants us to receive His Love, and then share that same Love with *all* His children—who are our brothers and sisters.

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Furthermore, Jesus' Baptism revealed something important to us about *water*. Of course, water is critical and essential for life. We need water for drinking, for growing plants, for

cleaning. Up to Jesus' time, water was also an important element for ritual cleansing. It was mostly an outward ritual to prepare one for a religious ceremony.

However, at His Baptism, rather than being *cleansed* by the water, Jesus *sanctified* the water. Jesus *changed* what water does for us. No longer is water limited to primarily outward or bodily effects. No longer is water merely an element that sustains life for us in this world. Now water has an inward effect that changes our being and gives us access to eternal life.⁹ Just as God went before and led the Ancient Israelites through the waters to freedom and life in the Promised Land, so does Jesus go before us, leading us through the waters of Baptism to freedom from sin and eternal life in His Heavenly Kingdom.

Furthermore, water continues to benefit us throughout our life here on Earth. It continues to be help for us on our journey to the Heavenly Kingdom. Holy water is one of the most recognizable elements or sacramentals of our faith. It was a shock to us last March when we removed our holy water fonts. We thought it was a temporary safety measure—and it *is* temporary— but it has lasted much longer than we thought it would.

But, holy water is important, which is why we are passing out bottles of holy water this weekend. Hopefully you picked yours up when you checked in for Mass. And, if you're watching from home, please contact the parish office and we can make arrangements for you to pick one up or figure out a way to get some to you.

Holy water is important—it's not magic or superstition—it's important because when it's used with faith, it has strong spiritual power to protect us from evil. It's important to use holy water often to drive away evil spirits, and to bless ourselves, our loved ones, our pets, homes, cars, and other places and objects we use regularly.

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Baptism marked the *beginning* of Jesus' public ministry. Baptism also marks the *beginning* of our new life. Whether we were Baptized as an infant or an adult, Baptism was our *new beginning* and always remains the basis of our whole life as Christians. Baptism is the gateway for us to enter into life in the Holy Spirit. It is the door that gives us access to all the other sacraments.¹⁰ Especially the Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick, that continually nourish us, heal us, and make us new again—always giving us an opportunity for a *new beginning*—all throughout our life.¹¹

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And just as at His Baptism Jesus was equipped for His Mission by the Father with the Holy Spirit, so we, too, are equipped at our Baptism for our mission. What is our mission? Our mission is to make sure that our thoughts and ways become more and more like God's. To make sure our thoughts, words, actions, and prayers more and more reflect these truths. To continue spreading the Good News about the truths that have been revealed to us the past two weeks: that Jesus came to save *all* people; that we are *all* sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters in God's Family.¹²

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Jesus came to our world and was Baptized for a mission to save all people. We are Baptized with that same mission—to desire that all people be saved and welcomed into God's Family. To be loving, patient, kind, forgiving, and merciful with all people, just as Jesus has been with us. To help others receive the same gift of a *new beginning*—a new life—that we have been given by the Lord.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 535: "Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan (Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22). John preaches 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Lk 3:3). A crowd of sinners (Lk 3:10-14; Mt 3:7, 21:32) - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes- come to be baptized by him. 'Then Jesus appears.' The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy

Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, 'This is my beloved Son' (Mt 3:13-17). This is the manifestation ('Epiphany') of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God."

² See Mark 1:14: "...Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God..."

³ See Matthew 2:1: "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem..."

Also, see Note for Matthew 2:1 at USCCB.org: "Magi: originally a designation of the Persian priestly caste, the word became used of those who were regarded as having more than human knowledge. Matthew's magi are astrologers."

⁴ See Isaiah 60:1-6: "Nations shall walk by your light... Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you—Your sons from afar, your daughters in the arms of their nurses. ...the wealth of nations shall come to you. ... All from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and heralding the praises of the LORD."

Also, see Isaiah 55:5: "So shall you summon a nation you knew not, and a nation that knew you not shall run to you, Because of the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you."

Also, see Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, 'In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.'"

⁵ See Isaiah 50:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

⁶ See 1 Timothy 2:3-6: "This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all."

⁷ Mark 1:11

⁸ Mark 1:10-11

⁹ See Isaiah 55:1: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water!"

¹⁰ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1213: "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments."

¹¹ See Revelation 21:5: "The one who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'"

Also see 2 Corinthians 5:17: "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."

¹² See Matthew 28:19-20: "Go, therefore, and 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. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Also see CCC 1223: "All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan. After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: 'Go therefore and 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.'"