

## Baptism of the Lord - C

January 13, 2019

St. Patrick's

Theme: As God's beloved Son, the baptized Jesus immersed himself as God's servant. In prayer, too, we are to be "faithful to our calling."

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After his baptism, later at prayer Jesus heard his Father's words, "**You are my beloved Son.**" In prayer he chose to be a servant, "**bringing forth justice for the nations, not crying out, not shouting.**"

We celebrate Christ's baptism. It also calls us to look at ours. That's why we started Mass with the sprinkling of the baptismal water, in order to strengthen and invigorate the gifts given us whenever each of us was baptized.

For the first 300 years of the church, it was a criminal offense if a person was baptized. Immersed in the waters and anointed "**in the Spirit and with fire,**" there was nothing sweet about baptism. You became an outlaw in society. (1) In fact, because the pagan world had its hooks into almost every aspect of life, most occupations became unacceptable for anyone baptized.

For example, if you were baptized, you couldn't be—

- an architect
- a teacher
- a sculptor
- a butcher
- You couldn't be in acting on the stage, nor serve in the military.

The work which you do now, or have done: You couldn't do it then, if you had been baptized. Yes, in those first 300 years of the church, it was a criminal offense if you were baptized. Oh, the ancient word "baptezain" means "to immerse or plunge." When you were immersed in those waters, something in you had to die. When you came out of those sacred waters, new life in Jesus—the Crucified One, now risen—cost you something.

In today's Gospel, just before it speaks of Jesus' baptism, the church's reader leaves out what St. Luke's Gospel says about John the Baptist. It said, right before

telling us of Jesus' baptism, that the Baptist had been put in jail because he reprimanded Herod for his sexual immorality. As John the Baptist had to pay a cost, so would God's beloved Son who became the servant whom the Old Testament longed for. Last Sunday, at the Epiphany of the Magi, already King Herod wanted to thrust a sword through the infant Jesus. His baptism pointed out that he would be **"a light for all nations,"** but not in the way folks expected. Jesus would not shout out, not use violence. Already, St. Luke's Gospel wants us to see that his baptism would cost Jesus the cross. You know, our baptism has got to cost us.

Yes, friends, Jesus' baptism would cost Jesus.

We come to the end of our Christmas season after today. Even at his baptism we see in Jesus a servant who became for us an outlaw crucified. For the first 300 years of the church, anyone baptized knew they had to live by a higher standard than everyone else. It had to cost them.

We put our hand gingerly in the baptismal waters, signing ourselves with the cross. Do we get it—signing ourselves with *the cross*? What does our baptism cost us in our daily life, as it did for Jesus and for the first Christians?

How are we in our family, with those close to us? **"Not shouting out, a bruised reed he shall not break"**—it says of our servant Jesus.

Are our lives different because of our integrity and honesty? Do we make our political decisions and our daily ones in light of those who are most vulnerable in our midst? Do political leaders see us as suspect, as disrupting the status quo? Do we live differently because of our baptism—in our relationships, our sexual lives, our jobs?

For the first 300 years, folks paid a heavy price when they were immersed in those sacred waters. It might give us pause as we put our hand in the baptismal waters, and sign ourselves with the cross...yes, with the cross.

On this last day of the Christmas season, already our allegiance turns to the cross.

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- (1) See Michael Himes, “Baptism” in The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction To Catholicism (Jefferson Valley, New York: A Fisher Production), a video presentation, n.d. Father Himes gives a fine overview of the baptismal commitment in the first 300 years of the church.

*General Intercessions*

*January 13, 2019*

*Baptism of the Lord*

**Renew all the baptized with the sacred waters of rebirth, that we might truly live with joy as the beloved children of God; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Bring a new bishop to our diocese who would have, in the words of Pope Francis, “the smell of the sheep”; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Heal those who have suffered abuse or injustice through the church; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Lead us to reach out to those who suffer loneliness, sickness, or grief; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Help us to rehabilitate our environment and practice good stewardship of the earth’s resources; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Lead all the faithful departed to share in your glorious light and life, especially as we pray for Lyda Laneville; we pray to you, O Lord—**

*(for the 8:30 a.m. Mass only--)*

**Bless Gabriel on the day of his baptism, so that he might know Jesus’ love for him; we pray to you, O Lord—**

