



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Deacon Terry Ellerman
January 13, 2019 The Baptism of the Lord

Reading I Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalm 29:1-10

Reading II Acts 10:34-38

Gospel Luke 3:15-22

Homily

I know that there is a danger because you might fall asleep, but would you please close your eyes and think for a minute about the most important event that ever happened in your life up to now. What is the most important event that has ever happened in your life? When you have figured that out, raise your hands. OK. You can open your eyes now. How many of you said, "My marriage was the most important?" If you have a spouse here that might be a good answer to the question. How many of you would say your birth? How many of you would say your first job? Graduating from college or an institution? There are lots of things in our life that are important, but there is only one most important thing. And what do you think that is: Your baptism.

Because at our baptism we came to a font like this one, and when we were baptized a number of things happened. Number one: All our sins were taken away. Number Two: We became a child of God. Number Three: We were anointed and made priest, prophet and king. Number Four: We had a candle that was lit using the Easter candle that represents Christ because we know that the light of Christ is in us. And finally, after we were baptized a baptismal garment was placed over us to show us our soul was completely pure. By being baptized our parents gave us the greatest gift they could ever give.

How many of you were baptized as a baby? How many of you were baptized as an adult? The ones baptized as an adult, you chose at that point to be baptized. But for the rest of us, we do not remember our baptism. In fact, if we go back far enough, our moms may not have even been there for the baptism because in the old days mothers and babies were kept in the hospital longer, and the church baptized people as quickly as possible. The bottom line is that baptism is that special gift when we received sanctified grace and all other sorts of graces to live a wonderful life.

Our parents brought us into the church, and the priest or the deacon asked at the back of the church, "What name do you give your child?" And you gave the name. Then he asked, "What do you want from your child?" Sometimes the answer is "baptism," sometimes the answer is "ever lasting life." He then asks the parents: "Are you willing to raise your child in the faith." And then to the Godparents: "Are you willing to help the parents raise this

child in the faith?" Then the baby is presented to the faith community and the priest asks: "Are we ready to help the parents and the Godparents raise this child in the faith?"

Baptism is the most important thing that can ever happen to us. All those things are important: marriage, birth, and others—but none is more important than baptism. In marriage what do we do? Hopefully we are saying, "We are going to help our partner get to Heaven."

So in our Gospel today we see Jesus coming to John the Baptist. And John the Baptist is the forerunner who says, "Get ready, get ready, get ready." And he is out there in the Jordan River baptizing people for the forgiveness of their sins. And so Jesus comes to John and says, "Baptize me." John says, "I can't baptize you. You should be baptizing me." Jesus says, "You will baptize me," and John does. Why? Jesus has no sins, so there is no reason for him to be baptized. But he does as a role model to show us how to live our life. He also, out of humility, is baptized. Because it is Jesus who comes into the world who takes on all of our sins and on that cross and through his blood redeems us. So when we are baptized and the water is poured over our head, we are baptized in the name of the Trinity.

There is another reason the baptism of Jesus is also important: If I asked you, which I am, how many Gods do we believe in? And we all answer—one. And how many persons are in that God? We all answer: Three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How do we know that? We know it from the reading today because when Jesus was baptized and he came up out of the water, the Heavens opened and the Father said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." And then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended over his head. So we can pictorially see that Trinity.

Every time we come into church we dip our fingers into the Holy water. Do we know why? We do it because we remember that day when we were baptized in this font, and we are happy with the fact that we are a child of God. Then what do we do? We make the sign of the cross to remember how we were baptized and who this God is: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So today we come to celebrate the baptism of Jesus—but more than that—we come to celebrate our own baptism and to realize that because of our baptism we are free of all our sins. Unfortunately that white garment we had at baptism becomes soiled somewhere down the line, and that is why we are happy to have the sacrament of reconciliation. And it is this baptism we must receive before we can receive any other sacraments. So, baptism is so, so important to all of us.

We are part of a family. We are part of a mystical body of Christ. We are people who are part of the Communion of Saints with all of those who have left us for Heaven. We are one. And each one of us needs to help each other, and to live good lives to get to Heaven.

There is a story that took place some years ago and it had to do with Henry Ford. Do you remember that Henry Ford was the one who invented cars, and the manufacturing of cars?

Ford opened his factories in a number of places but the main facility was in Detroit. There was a man who had worked for Mr. Ford for a number of years. For whatever reason, when he needed a tool at home he would take it home and use it. Every once in a while if he needed a part, he would bring a part home. Over the years he had accumulated a lot of tools, and lot of parts. He would say he wasn't stealing because he had good intentions of bringing them back.

Then, later in his life a miracle happened. God found him, and he found religion and came back home. When he was baptized he said, "My soul is clean, this is good, but I probably ought to bring all those parts and tools back to the factory."

So he did. He filled up his truck, and the next day called the foreman and said, "I didn't really mean to steal these, but I have accumulated some things I shouldn't have." And he gave them back. Well the foreman was elated and said, "Isn't this wonderful." He telegraphed Mr. Ford and told him the story and Mr. Ford came back with one statement, "Damn up the Detroit River, and bring all the workers to be baptized."

Now, just because we are baptized does not mean that we always do the right thing. So one of the things we look to in our own baptism, we thank our parents or whoever brought us to the church to be baptized, but we also remember that this was the beginning. When you are baptized you are called to be disciples, you are called to go out into the world to make a difference. We are called into the world to bring other people into the church and to praise God.

So on this feast day of the Baptism of Jesus, we thank Him for all that he has done for us. We remember that we are not only a child of God, but because we are—we have obligations to use our gifts to make the world a better place. So when we leave church today and dip our finger in the Holy Water, let us remember that it is not just a ritual we do every time we enter church, but we are truly remembering our baptism and we thank God for being his children.

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