



BAPTISM

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Last Monday, January 8, we celebrated the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the official ending of the liturgical season of Christmas. From time to time, it is a good idea to review what Baptism really means for us. The ritual is filled with important symbols. Water is the most obvious and it is the substance that reminds us that we are cleansed of original sin and given new life in Christ. The two kinds of holy oil used in Baptism, Oil of Baptism and Chrism Oil, remind us that we are brought into contact with God and made holy by Him. The Chrism Oil is a sign of the sealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The white garment placed on the newly Baptized is a sign of innocence and the new life of resurrection. Like the paschal candle, the Baptismal candle is a symbol of the risen Christ and is a reminder that we must keep the flame of our Baptism glowing so that our lives may shine with the light of Christ.

The sacrament of Baptism is the first of the three sacraments of initiation. The other two are Eucharist and Confirmation. Those who wish to be followers of Christ must go through the initiation of Baptism. Through our Baptism, we become sons and daughters of God, and are given the grace and strength to carry out the commitment that we, as Christians, are asked to make. Because of our Baptismal commitment we are called to go out and bring God's Good News (the Gospel) to others and to help make His presence known to them.

We are the ones called to open the eyes of the blind, the ones who are living their lives in darkness, not knowing the Lord. We are the ones who are to help bring those spiritually imprisoned out of confinement, for only in Jesus do we have true freedom. God does the healing and the freeing, but so often He works through us.

Jesus Himself went through Baptism and this shows most clearly His humanity, His willingness to put Himself in our place and to experience all of human life, except sin. Jesus clearly identifies with us. Let us pray that we might be strengthened so that we can live out our Christian Baptismal commitment to love all people and to share the Good News of Jesus with them. Let us pray that we may recognize that we are sons and daughters of God through our Baptism, and that fact makes us brothers and sisters to one another.

Father David