

WORD FROM THE PASTOR

JOHN'S BAPTISM & CHRISTIAN BAPTISM



A week ago, we were still in Bethlehem with the Magi. We joyfully celebrated the birth of Jesus and his manifestation to the pagan world. Today, we are taken forward thirty years to celebrate another Epiphany, the one that took place during his baptism by John. This marks Jesus' entry into his public ministry.

This event was foretold in the sixth century before Christ. At that time, the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon; the prophet Isaiah strove to give them courage: he announced the "servant" whose mission would be to accomplish God's work of salvation. God's will is to save all of humanity. He is the one who opens the eyes of the blind and sets the oppressed free. Above all, he is the one who makes a covenant with his people

It is this hope that the people God has chosen must bear witness to. Even if they are tossed about by the great empires of the time, nothing should stop them. Their mission is to **make the True God known to the pagans. They must proclaim God's message "with firmness and gentleness."** In the eyes of men, this may seem insignificant. But God is there. He rests His Spirit upon his servant. The latter must bear witness that God is light and liberation for all people.

The Gospel recounts the event of Jesus' baptism by John. This is His first public manifestation. **He mingles with the crowd of sinners to receive the baptism given by John.** Yet, He has no sins to be forgiven. He therefore has no need of repentance. This baptism of Jesus was not necessary for him. But it was necessary for us. If Jesus chose to receive this baptism, it was to be immersed in our very concrete human condition. He entered the waters of Jordan pure of all sin. He emerged bearing all the sins of the world. This evil that weighs us down, he takes it upon himself because he wants to free us from it. He wants to free us from it because he wants us to live happily.

This feast of the Lord announces another, much greater baptism, the one received by Christians. On the one hand, we see Jesus entering the muddy waters of the Jordan and taking upon himself all our sins. **With Christian baptism, we are immersed in this Ocean of Love that is in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** This is important for us: we live in a world threatened by hatred and violence. **All of this is a ticking time bomb that we absolutely must defuse.** We are sent into this world as it is to tell it and show it through our entire lives that God loves it. With Jesus, nothing can ever be the same again. **He is the one who gave God to humanity and humanity to God.**

It is with this mission in mind that we come to be renewed at the Eucharistic Table. Christ is there to communicate His life to us. **He is the living bread on our human journey. We pray to You, Lord, help us to truly rediscover the Strength and Greatness of this GIFT You give us. Grant us to immerse ourselves each day in this Ocean of Love that is in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Very Rev. Fr. Lucien Eugene Pierre Ph.D., Pastor, VF

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