

BAPTISM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST **Father Ed's Homily**
SCRIPTURE READINGS YEAR C: IS 40:1-5,911; Ti 2:11-14;3:4-7 & LK 3:15-16,21-22.

Theme: What is your Calling in life?

This past weekend, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord Jesus Christ, meaning a revelation of the newborn King, Jesus Christ, to the whole world. Today we celebrate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, another form of epiphany that will bring us to the end of Christmas season. It means we will begin the season of Ordinary Time on this coming Monday, January 13, 2025, which will lead us into the Season of Lent on March 5, Ash Wednesday.

Baptism, as we all know, is the first of the Seven Sacraments that Jesus Christ gave to us. Baptism as a Sacrament cleanses us of our original sin and also, in the case of one who has reached the age of reason, of a particular sin. Through it, we become children of God and members of Christ's Body, the Church. The Rite put it so beautifully: "Through baptism, men and women are incorporated into Christ. They are formed into God's people, and they obtain forgiveness of all their sins" (page 3).

So, if the main purpose of Sacrament of Baptism is to cleanse us of original sin and makes us to become God's children and members of Christ's body, the Church, and leads us to eternal life, then why should Jesus Christ be baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist? Great question to ask! We know Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second Person in the Trinity, and that he was born of a woman, Mary, who by the grace of God, was without original sin (Immaculate Conception of Mary). Jesus accepted baptism to show his solidarity with John's proclamation of God's salvific plan. Through baptism, Jesus Christ, who is without sin, identified himself with us sinners so that he would save us for eternal life. So, at his baptism, Jesus has publicly accepted our human condition.

For us to understand the Gospel reading, we have to know the background of this particular passage. John the Baptist's appearance has raised high expectations of the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist, a man of humility and simplicity, clearly admitted he was not the Messiah. He told the crowd that he has come to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. That explained his baptism for repentance. Jesus' baptism would cleanse them of their sins and made them children of God for eternal life with God.

Luke's Gospel regularly presents Jesus at prayer at every important point in his ministry. Here are these instances: at Jesus' baptism, we just read today, then appointing of the Twelve Apostles, LK 6:1; before Peter's Confession, LK 9:18; at the Transfiguration, LK 9:28, when he teaches his disciples to pray, LK 11:1-8; at the Last Supper LK 22:32; on Mount of Olives, LK 22:41; and then on the Cross, LK 23:46. You will notice that Jesus begins and ends his earthly ministry with prayers. Luke presents him as a perfect model for all of us his followers to follow.

Fellow parishioners, do you know your calling in life? Through baptism, we all have received a special vocation to become disciples of Jesus. Jesus, aware of his calling in life, explained why he started his public ministry with baptism. Saul, who became Paul through baptism, became aware of his vocation as an evangelist, an apostle, and a missionary to the Gentiles. You heard him in the second reading reminding us of God's grace and love that are revealed in Jesus Christ, especially in baptism.

Fellow parishioners, whatever profession you find yourself in, consider it as your vocation, a calling by Jesus to serve those you encounter in your office. For you to be successful in your vocation, you must be a person of prayer like Jesus. Even though Jesus is God the Son, he prayed frequently and never did anything without communicating/praying to his heavenly Father. He has given us a model to follow.

As we celebrate the feast of the baptism of Jesus Christ, let it remind us of our baptism also. Let us always remember that through baptism, Jesus has called us into special ministry/profession. Leonard Durham reminds us of this: "Baptism challenges all to be and to live as community of faith, based on the Word and on the freedom and love that Christ has brought." Through baptism, we have a special calling to serve Christ and his people. By doing it faithfully, we continue Jesus' mission and also prepare for his Second Coming as the first reading calls us to do.

May Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph pray, for us to know our vocation in life and to respond to it faithfully.