

The Feast of the Baptism of Jesus - January 12, 2020

The celebration of the Baptism of Jesus rounds out our Christmas celebration. This Feast is related to the Feast of the Epiphany in many ways the Feast of the Epiphany was the showing of the Christ to the outside world the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord introduces Jesus and the beginning of His public ministry.

The Baptism of Jesus was an event that was not without controversy back then, and even now, among His followers. The Baptism of Jesus was a source of embarrassment to the early Christians. Even John the Baptist, himself, as we see in today's Gospel, found it inappropriate that he should baptize Jesus and he tried to prevent it. Why was this ? It was because John's baptism was a summons to repentance. It was for sinners who were conscious of their sinfulness. Now, of one thing the early Christians were certain, Jesus was no sinner. He did not stand in need of repentance. What relevance could John's baptism have for Him ? Why did He submit himself to it ?

This is a really important question ! There has been no shortage of speculation about this issue over the years ? So what do you think ?????? Why did Jesus submit to John's Baptism, which was a baptism unto repentance, since He was without sin ?

I consider it to be a very important question because it provides us a powerful insight into Jesus and His planned Ministry. Jesus' acceptance of John's baptism was a symbolic act ! He wanted to show solidarity with the people He had come to help. For this reason, it was important that He was baptized, and baptized publicly. In this special action, He was identifying with sinners. When He stepped into the waters of the Jordan River, He was in effect saying to them, "I'm on your side." He is our "Bridge over Troubled Waters" Remember that great Simon & Garfunkel song?!

On the day of His baptism, Jesus joined the ranks of sinners. This is why He said to John : "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

The Father approved of what He was doing, and set His seal on Him by anointing Him with the oil of compassion for His mission. What Jesus did on that day at the Jordan was to serve as a model for His public Ministry. He would not keep Himself apart from sinners. Which was the core problem of the Religious leadership of His day. He would not wait for them to come to Him. He would seek them out, and go among them. He would befriend them. He would welcome them. Jesus didn't stand apart or put Himself above sinners He came to save.

A modern day expression of that reality would be the following story:
When leprosy broke out among the people of the Hawaiian islands in the last century, the authorities responded by establishing a leper colony on the remote island of Molokai. The victims were snatched by force from their families, and sent to perish on

this island. However, moved by their terrible plight, a young Belgian priest, Damien De Veuster, asked to be allowed to minister to them. Straight away, he realized that there was only one effective way to do this : that was to go and live among them. Having received permission, he went to Molokai.

At first, he tried to minister to them while maintaining a certain distance. But, he soon realized that he had to live among them in order to gain their trust. As a result, he contracted leprosy himself. The reaction of the lepers was immediate and wholehearted. They embraced him and took him into their hearts. He was now one with them. There was no longer a need to keep a safe distance. The lepers now had 'one among them' who could talk with authority about leprosy, about brokenness, about rejection, and about public shame.

Jesus' appearance in our midst, His baptism, and His Mission, and Ministry are the very same in our livesif we let it ! But we have got to want that help that assistance ... we have got to claim it ... it is not going to be forced upon us.

—Fr. Gerry Hurley