

Baptism of the Lord.
1/10/2021

A NEW EXODUS

Last week we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany, the manifestation of Jesus to the world. And this week with the Baptism of the Lord, we jump ahead about thirty years and find another epiphany Lord but there's something more.

Perhaps the single most important and most defining event of the Old Testament is the Exodus. Led by Moses and guided by God, the Israelites leave the slavery of Egypt, pass through the waters of the Red Sea, and eventually enter into the promised land. And in today's gospel, we find not just an epiphany but a new exodus.

Jesus is baptized and then let's take a look at what happens.

He saw the heavens being torn open. Centuries earlier Isaiah cried out, *Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.* This represents a new exodus and that there is an end to the separation between God and humanity and the beginning of a new communication between heaven and earth.

The Spirit like a dove descends upon him. Again, this goes back to Isaiah who said, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me.* This too indicates a communication from God. It even harkens back to creation when the spirit of God hovered over the waters.

A voice came from the heavens. Obviously, this is a divine communication. If you're looking for a message from heaven, here it is and these all lead up to the most important aspect of all.

You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. We're told who Jesus is, the Son of God, and that the favor of God is upon him. It's been said that with this there is a new era of hope in the world.

With Jesus' baptism there's a new showing forth, a new creation and a new exodus.

Now that may all sound very nice but it leads to a question: What does any of this have to me and how I live my life? The answer is a lot. Jesus embodies the new people of God being born as a new creation and as a new exodus and both these indicated new life.

What happened to Jesus happened for us. Jesus came to unite himself to us. He did this by human birth that we have been celebrating throughout the season of Christmas as we recall the glorious, magnificent, mind boggling, tremendous mystery of God becoming human that we call the Incarnation.

Now with his baptism, Jesus takes it another step further. Although without sin, in an effort to unite himself to us he shares in John's baptism of repentance and this not only indicates a new creation and new exodus, his going down into the water anticipates his eventual death and his rising from the water his resurrection.

And it doesn't stop there, through his death and resurrection he frees us from our sins. And it doesn't even stop there. Here in the Eucharist Jesus continues to gift himself to us with his real presence under the form of bread and wine.

Through our own baptism, which is qualitatively different from that of John the Baptist, we share in the dying and rising of Jesus, in his Paschal Mystery, in his exodus. In baptism we become a new creation and we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. At his baptism Jesus is revealed as the son of God and in our baptism we become adopted sons and daughters of God. What Jesus is by nature, or as we say in the creed, consubstantial with the Father, we are by adoption. In baptism we make an exodus from the slavery of sin into the promised land of God's children.

At his baptism, Jesus is revealed by the Father as the Son upon whom rests the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Trinity is revealed to the world. In our baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are brought into relationship with the Trinity as we share sacramentally in Jesus' dying and rising and reborn as children of God. The rest of our lives consist in growing in this new relationship.

In baptism we are freed from sin, reborn as children of God, we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission. Our baptism calls us to something active, not passive but active. Baptism calls us to be Christians, that is to be little Christs in the world today and it has to do with us

because we're called to let the light of Christ shine through us no matter who we are and no matter what we are doing so that others can see Christ in us.

We are to be a people letting the light of Christ shine through We need people letting this light shine through them in classrooms, boardrooms, operating rooms, in businesses in factories, in technology, in politics and in politics some more, and in every other walk of life. And not only that, the grace of our baptism can also open our eyes to Christ in others, particularly in those most in need, the poor, the refugee, the sick and the unborn. It calls us to love as Jesus loves.

We may live out our baptism in some extraordinary way such as dying for the faith but that's not the only way. Our own St. Therese reminds us that we can live out our baptism in the ordinary events of daily life even in something as simple as picking a fallen object up off the floor, doing little acts with great love. We're called to daily live this new life, to grow in this new life with lives of intentional faith, and just as importantly, to preserve this new life from sin rejecting evil, violence and lies and daily striving to see and serve Christ in others, even in those we don't like, even with those with whom we disagree. Baptism calls us to show compassion and not break the bruised reed to quench the smoldering wick.

We can all remember our birthday but the day our baptism is the day of our rebirth. How many people know the day of their baptism? If you don't it shouldn't be too hard to find out that date. That is our re-birthday and we should certainly remember it and even possibly celebrate it each year. Consider using it as a password on a computer program to help you remember.

What Jesus did, he did for us—to bring us new life. With his baptism he launches his public ministry with a new exodus into a new creation. Through the grace of our baptism, may all that we do be for him so as to share in the love and joy of that new life and to do so forever.