

Homily for 01-12-14 – Baptism of the Lord

- Baptism of the Lord--an odd Solmenity.
- Sacrament--necessary for the remission of sins, particularly Original Sin. So, why was Christ baptized?
- He was born without Original Sin, and naturally didn't sin.
- Submission to Baptism provided the example for the rest of us to follow.
- Gospel theme – follow the Lord into the waters of Baptism.
- We follow Him because we recognize His voice. If we don't recognize him, or if we live in fear of commitment to Christ, we are apt to follow the wrong person.
- Story of missionary struggling with Spanish who visits Venezuela and one of the local churches. Sits in front pew, decides to imitate man next to him. The man claps, so the missionary claps. The man stands up, the missionary stands up. The man sits down, the missionary sits down. Later in the Mass the man stands up again, so the missionary stands up, too. A hush falls over the entire congregation. Many parishioners gasp. The missionary looks around, sees no one else standing, so he sits down.
- After the Mass, the priest greets the missionary and says: "I take it you don't speak Spanish," and the missionary replies, "No, I don't. Is it that obvious?" "Well yes," When I ask the man to stand what I said was: "My friends, the Acosta family recently had a baby. Let us recognize the proud father." So, once again, it is important to follow the right person.
- Baptism is related to the death and Resurrection of Christ. In order to be saved, we have to emulate Christ in His Death and Resurrection. What He went through, we go through.
- Close relationship between burial and resurrection. The catechumen is plunged into the water as Christ was plunged into death. *There is a baptism with which I must be baptized and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!*
- Old Testament water is considered the abode of demons, abode of the dead.
- Job complains to God: *Am I the sea, or a monster of the deep, that you place a watch over me?* Psalms: *You stirred the sea in your might; you smashed the heads of the dragons on the waters.* Isaiah ...*He will slay the dragon that is in the sea.*
- Daniel's vision: ...*I saw during the night, suddenly the four winds of Heaven stirred up the great sea from which emerged four immense beasts.* Book of Revelation--no sea in the new earth after the resurrection of the body. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the SEA was no more.*
- We follow Christ into the fight against evil and chaos through our Baptism--why we are called the Church militant.
- He entered the water, made it holy, and then summoned us to follow. He is our commander. He goes into battle, and asks us to fight along with Him--Saying to us, follow me into that water where you will be tested by those demons and emerge victorious with Me for all eternity.
- Roots of Baptism--Israel's escape from Egyptian enslavement across the Red Sea. Moses--God wanted His people freed. Pharaoh refused, but ultimately released them. Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to bring them back.
- Trapped between Red Sea and Egyptian army Israel began despairing. Moses declared, *Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the LORD will win for you today. These Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again. The LORD himself will fight for you.*
- God then sent a strong east wind to blow all night, until the sea divided and the water piled on either side like a wall, with dry land where Israel could walk across.

- Brings a whole new meaning to “Divide and conquer.”
- The Red Sea--defining event that freed Israelites from temporal slavery. Baptism--the defining event in our lives that makes us free from slavery to sin.
- New Testament--Paul tells Corinthians: *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*
- Israelites had only one choice for survival – unite under Moses. Israel was baptized into Moses in the sea and in the cloud (which was the Holy Spirit). Christians are born of water and the Spirit. Our only choice for survival—unite under Jesus Christ—or there is no survival.
- The cloud that led Israel signifies the Spirit. Cloud stood between them and their enemies and protected them. It sanctified them. It led them through the wilderness. In the same way, the Holy Spirit leads Christians through the spiritual wasteland.
- The Red Sea signifies the water of baptism. The Israelites passed through safely, leaving their enslavers behind to die. In our Baptism we pass through the trials of life with Christ leaving behind the sins that would enslave us.
- Many of the incidents which accompanied Christ's baptism are indicators of what happened at our Baptisms. At Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon Him; at our Baptism the Trinity took its abode in our soul. At His baptism Christ was proclaimed the "Beloved Son" of the Father; at our Baptism we become the adopted sons of God. At Christ's baptism the heavens were opened; at our Baptism heaven was opened to us.
- No need of Our Lord to submit to the rite of Baptism by John. No need personally of having sins remitted, but He assumed a nature which was related to sinful humanity.
- He was without sin, He appeared to all men as a sinner, as He did on the cross.
- He walked into the Jordan with all the rest of the sinners to demand the baptism of penance.
- Christ's Flesh blessed the water. Descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice of God the Father--that this was His Son, in Whom He was well pleased, marked the beginning of Christ's public ministry--One of the most direct references to the Trinity.
- Conclude with prayer to the Trinity.

Assist me , O Most Holy Trinity, in all my trials of life, enlighten me in my ignorance, advise me in my doubts, strengthen me in my weakness, help me in all my needs, protect me in temptations and console me in afflictions. All powerful God, keep us united with your Son in his death and burial so that we may rise to new life with Him, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.