

Reflection for the Baptism of the Lord

Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in His own Baptism anticipates His death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with Him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and walk in newness of life. 537 Catechism of the Catholic Church

The baptism of the Jesus by John the Baptist is a major event in the world, which is described in the three synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Most biblical scholars have determined Al-Maghtas, which is located alone Jordan to be the place on the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. It is after the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist that Jesus the Messiah begins His three years of ministry. John the Baptist the last of the prophets came into the world with one purpose and that was to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. The final Prophet, that prepared the world for the coming of the Savior, informed people that they needed to repent and reform their lives. John the Baptist was not focused on external preparation but rather he was focused on internal preparation. This final Prophet was focused on the hearts of men and women of his day and informing them that to be ready for the coming of the Messiah their hearts needed to be cleansed and made open for the coming of the one who was promised.

John the Baptist did administer a baptism of repentance, as part of the people of God preparing for the coming of the Messiah. John knew that the Christ was at hand and he was not worthy to untie His sandal strap. The last Prophet also knew that his baptism was a baptism of repentance, and that the Messiah, who was coming after him, would baptize with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist knew that his work, his ministry only made sense in context, the prophets that can before him, and the Messiah who came after him. The ministry of John the Baptist is wholly dependent on the Messiah. The Messiah and His ministry in this world are independent of John the Baptist. What this means is that John the Baptist has not meaning and message without the Messiah, but the Messiah does not need the ministry of John the Baptist to exist or have meaning.

The Baptism that is the first of the seven Sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ assimilates us to Jesus. It is through our humility of being willing to die to ourselves and to be reborn through the Baptismal waters that we can look forward to eternal salvation and be a part of the mystical body of Christ. Paragraph 537 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church beautifully points out what happens in the Baptismal waters that changes us, which is our encounter with Christ. In the waters of Baptism, we encounter Christ who has gone before us in the Baptismal waters. In His Baptism at the river Jordan, He anticipates His death and resurrection. As we enter the waters of Baptism, this humble act of self-abasement and repentance, we go down into the waters with Jesus Christ to rise with Him, to be reborn in water and Spirit.

The event of the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan is more than the historical event that marks the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. It is an invitation for each one of us to follow Christ into the life-giving waters of Baptism and become sons and daughters of our loving God. Yes, today as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we embrace the start of His public ministry. Jesus Christ informing the world of the New Covenant, an invitation to a New World, a new way of life. This Feast reminds each one of us that our own Baptisms are a portal, and door that opens and invites us into a relationship with God. This relationship is like no other, we become sons and daughters of our Creator, and we look forward to eternal salvation. All this is possible because we consent to abandon ourselves and enter the waters of redemption, going down into the waters of renewal with Jesus Christ and rising with Him as sons and daughters of the one who has created us.