

Homily. Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Year. C. 8/9 January 2022.

What John did with those who wanted to change and reform their way of life in readiness for the coming of the Messiah was to take them waist deep into the River Jordan, facing the far side, the pagan lands, and away from God's Holy Land. There he immersed them as a sign of washing off their old ways of thought and deed. Then John spun them around, facing back towards the land of God's promise, leading them back refreshed and renewed into the people of God.

When Jesus, the greater one than John, came to the River He went along with this ritual changing its meaning by making it a sign of dedication to God's will and ways. As today's Preface says; By God's signs and wonders He made a new Baptism. This new Baptism is not only one of repentance and renewal but of a life long commitment to growing in the life of God. It's into the Baptism of Jesus Christ that we are born again, a second birth which like our first birth into the human community and into our own little families can only happen once.

The work of our Christian lives whether we knew it or not, and most of us didn't for we were mere children, began with our Baptism. This work is that of allowing the water of rebirth to soak all over us and ever deeper into us until every atom of our being becomes Christ-like, reborn and made anew in His image. Our work is to work with God and with one another until we come to have the mind and heart for others that Christ has for us and for our world. This is what we mean by our Christian vocation to holy living, a vocation for life made possible by God's grace and the Spirit of Holiness, forgiveness and loving at work within us.

Our Church by its teaching, liturgy and example tries to help us go along with will of God for us, to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Our Sacraments and community prayer, our many Parish groups, social events and ministries all aim to help us in serving to others a portion of the life and love of the Lord. That we will fail in this work is inevitable. That we get up and try again by our experience of God's Mercy is what makes us into the saints of God today, incidentally a phrase of which St. Paul was fond.

With absolute certainty then this Feast is one for giving blessing to the Lord God with all of our soul, a joyful, hope-filled celebration of the Christ-life still alive in us despite our sins and setbacks of every kind. For, to quote the words of the final prayer of our Mass; We humbly entreat God's mercy upon all of us, so that nourished by the sacred gifts we receive here, the Eucharist of Christ Himself, we might become God's children in this world, not only in name but in fact and in truth.