

Brothers and Sisters

As we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord, the feast calls to mind our own baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes the forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adopted son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ.” CCC 1279

Our Eastern brethren refer to this great feast as Theophany, because it is in Christ’s Baptism that he reveals his sonship and thereby reveals the face of the Father. Furthermore, we participate in this sonship when we are united to Christ through our own baptisms. Baptism is the sacrament by which one becomes a Christian. In our baptism, we receive the graces necessary for our salvation and are made capable of participating in Christ’s redemptive work. We are now more than what we were. We are now capable of responding to the love of the Father through the work of the Son.

We do not deserve this gift. Yet because Christ gives freely, we must accept humbly. St Gregory of Nazianzus says that “Baptism is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty; Baptism because sin is buried in the water; anointing for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; enlightenment because it radiates light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washes; and seal as it is our guard and sign of God’s Lordship.”

This is no merely pious thought; this is an incarnational reality. The baptized person has the grace to respond to God’s love and therefor the responsibility to respond. This is done through faithful participation in the life of the Church, through her sacraments, through the life of virtue, through the life of prayer, and through care for our neighbor. Our baptism must be lived. Our baptism must inform the world around us as we allow our baptism to form us. Through the Christian life which flows from our baptism, we allow Christ to renew all things in him. “Behold, I make all things new” Rev 21:5.

Pax,
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