

**Fr. Brad Neely**

**Baptism of the Lord**

**Sts Peter & Paul: Jan 10, 2010**

**Is 40: 1-5, 9-11; Titus 2: 11-14; 3:4-7; Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22.**

[for Mark and Mt accounts: see Gregory of Nansianzus: *John the Baptist is the "lamp in the presence of the sun."* Lit Hours Bk I, p635]

I've mentioned before the usefulness of comparing our relationship with Christ to that of a marriage, where a man and a woman consent to join their lives together. If we consider the divine teaching that in marriage, two flesh are united into one flesh, we encounter the closest and most intimate bond that can occur between two people. Also, what could be closer than co-creating with God-- new life. But even taking marriage and children into consideration, all Christians have another kind of close and very personal relationship in their lives. We were *baptized* into it.

I've mentioned numerous times before that the Greek origin of the word **baptize** means to be "immersed" into a fluid, or to "plunge into." Immerse or plunge into what? The Church's Trinitarian formula for baptism is as much as to say: "I completely "immerse" you into the Supreme Being of the universe, known to us in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If the words of baptism don't mean anything, I guess it is just an occasion to get wet. In the fashion of baptism, a man and woman could also say something like: "We completely *immerse* ourselves in each other, for the rest of our lives---through it all." Having said these words to each other, would it make sense for such a couple to subsequently see each other about 1 hour per week? Also, outside of that hour— not to communicate much.

Considering these two simple marriage scenarios can help us put our relationship

with Christ in sharp focus. Of course, you can't have a vital marriage with such little contact. How vital and meaningful is our contact with Christ?

Jesus, himself, did not need to be baptized. He was already sinless, and already, obviously, "part of himself and his own body." The Catechism says this: "Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, *intended* for sinners, in order to 'fulfill all righteousness.' Jesus' gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying. The Spirit, who had hovered over the waters of the first creation, descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his 'beloved Son.' (CCC1224) So, in His self-emptying way, Christ submitted himself to fulfill all righteousness--- so that those who emulate his baptism, and join him *in his life*, could come with a state of proper uprightness--- in right relationship the midst of His divinity.

The catechism continues, noting that Jesus began his public life *after* his baptism by John in the Jordan. And after His resurrection, the newly glorified Christ gave this mission to His apostles: '*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*' (Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16: 15-16) (CCC1223)

This statement of Jesus is in the form of a command. The command for the nations to be "immersed" in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, depends, first, on all of our individual *immersions*. We are baptized / immersed, one at a time.

The words used in this immersion *mean something*.  
So, the question is,  
“am I living the true meaning of my immersion?”

I mentioned earlier, the CCC’s reference  
to the baptism of Christ.  
It mentioned the qualities  
that Christ exhibited in his own baptism:  
submission, self-emptying,  
the promotion of righteousness.....  
As a result of my own baptism,  
I do exhibit these same qualities?  
And quite importantly:  
do I devote sufficient and meaningful time  
to the One in whom I am immersed,  
just as a married couple  
must spend time with each other?

Well, time is a big question.  
Even though we are all give  
the same 24 hours in one day,  
time for a lot of us seems to be at a premium.  
This is where setting priorities comes in.  
We can’t have it all---so what is most important?

I hope the answer for all of us  
is that our relationship with Christ is a priority.  
It is a *crucial* priority.  
I will be so bold as to suggest something  
that has gone out of fashion these days---  
religiously speaking.  
*that is---the state of our immersion  
into the life of Christ while on earth  
will have something to do  
with the state of our existence  
beyond this earthly life.*  
Jesus refers to this often enough in the Scriptures.  
Again, should we assume  
that His words mean something.

As a husband turns to a wife,  
who has given him her whole life,  
and as she turns to him  
who has given her his whole life,  
so is our relationship with Christ.  
We are to turn to and spend time with Christ,  
because He is the One  
who has given us entry, through baptism,  
into all of who He is.