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The Baptism of Our Lord: Year A

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Is 42: 1-6, 6-7; Acts 10: 34-38; Mt 3: 13-17

We're talking about baptism today.

I heard a story recently

of a river full immersion baptism session.

This was a Protestant denomination.

A passerby stopped to see what was going on,
and the pastor asked him

if he wanted to "find Jesus."

The man said, "Sure!"

So he dunked him in the water the first time,
pulled him up, and asked, "Did you find Jesus?"

The man replied, "No."

The pastor dunked him a second time,
pulled him up and asked the same question,

"Have you found Jesus?"

Again the answer was, "No."

He dunked the man a third time,

and again, asked, "Have you found Jesus?"

The man said, "NO—are you sure this is where he fell
in?"

We understand from Scripture and Tradition,

that Jesus presented himself

for a full immersion baptism

in the Jordan River,

conferred upon him by John the Baptist.

As a reminder, the actual word "baptize,"
means to be *immersed*.

Jesus, in His own baptism,

put **flesh** to this ritual of immersion.

Even though Christ had no need

to "*be immersed*" in *Himself*,

it is evident by His baptism account,

that in addition to He, the Son of God,

His heavenly Father was also present

and their Holy Spirit.

As we accept baptism, in the example of Jesus,

The Father and Holy Spirit are present to us as well.

We are *immersed* into the Holy Trinity.

God created us with **flesh**---

as *body and soul*.

God did not choose to create us as spirits only.

With our own experience of life,

we understand that there is something about us
that is beyond merely our bodies.

We understand that we have a spirit-- a soul.

So, in dispensing divine life through the sacraments,

we experience, in the flesh,

what we believe is happening spiritually

that we cannot see.

Considering body and soul---flesh and spirit,

one of the deepest mysteries revealed to us,

is that we have been created

in the *image and likeness of God*.

In baptism, I often bring to mind Mary and Joseph

taking baby Jesus to the Temple

to be circumcised---

that is, to receive, *physically*, a mark

that specifically points to the consecration

of the life of Jesus to God.

Mary and Joseph presented Jesus

for a physically observable rite

that denoted what they were offering, also, *spiritually*.

In the rite of baptism,

that we express physically

what we believe is happening spiritually---

is accomplished with the use

of human signs and symbols.

The priest gives flesh to the *person of Christ*.

The priest asks for the **name** of the person

to be baptized.

We come to the sacrament with *a name*.

Jesus has a **name**, divinely instituted,

meaning, "God saves."

If the person being baptized

is under the age of 7,

their *parents* and *godparents* make a *promise*

to bring them up in the faith

they are entering into,

in practice and by catechesis.

Also, if under the age of 7,

there are two *anointings*.

To anoint is to "*seal*" or "*bond*" a person

to something, or in the case of baptism---SOMEONE.

The first anointing is with the Oil of Catechumans.

This seals the person

for future education in their faith.

There is a *Profession of Faith*,

and a *Renunciation of Satan*.

For those under age 7,

this is done by their parents and godparents.

To accept entry into the divine life of God

means to turn from, and reject, Satan.

There is the blessing of *water*.

Water is an ancient symbol of life itself,
and a symbol of cleansing.

Water is a significant sign in salvation history.

Jesus chose to incorporate water
when he instituted baptism into the New Covenant.

Immersion into the life of Christ
brings us true life, and cleanses us.

The **second anointing** for an infant,
or the one anointing for an adult,
is with the oil of Chrism.

This seals and bonds the newly baptized
into the life of Christ--who is priest, prophet, and king.

The person being baptized is **clothed in white**,
the liturgy color of Christ.

They are to carry their baptismal identity with them,

as if to “wear” Christ in the world.

The baptismal **candle** during the rite
brings to mind the truth
that Jesus is the **light of the world**.

In coming to baptism,
we bring our bodies and souls
to be immersed in the life
of the Jesus the Son, the heavenly Father,
and their Holy Spirit.

They are three persons in one God.

We **are** changed by this!

But remember that even baptism
does not compromise our human freedom.

We must freely choose to cooperate
with the graces baptism brings,
and freely live according to our baptismal identity.