

***The Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord***  
***January 13, 2019***

This feast of the Lord's Baptism is the final feast of the Christmas season, serving as a transition point linking Christmas time to Ordinary Time. Christ is presented as God's "Beloved Son." And, the Baptism marks the beginning of Christ's mission; He is to reveal God, the Father, and to usher in the kingdom of God to our world.

It is significant that our baptism brings us into the Body of Christ – the Church. Further, it places us on the path of carrying on with Christ's mission on earth. When the Holy Spirit came upon us (at our baptism), we became God's beloved children in Christ. His mission (the Church's mission) then became our mission.

The Jewish expectation at the time of Christ's baptism suggests some important things to consider. Biblical historians tell us the Jewish nation was waiting to hear from God. They had waited over 300 years for a prophet to provide direction from God. John the Baptist appeared looking and acting like Elijah incarnate. He proclaims what God expects of them. He directs them in specific ways regarding their behavior; soldiers cannot continue to extort, tax collectors cannot continue to collect extra for their own pockets, etc. They must live the teaching of love God and their fellow man.

As John the Baptist was preaching repentance and baptizing, Jesus shows up and desires to be baptized with the crowds. Jesus' baptism reflected God's desire for all men to repent and be baptized. This is reinforced with the Holy Spirit coming down upon Jesus like a dove. This was powerful scene which reflected God's mercy and love.

You may recall what John the Baptist stated: "He must increase, I must decrease." (John 3:30) All of our egocentric ways must give way to His path, His light, His truth, His perfection. If we are truly interested in moving toward perfection so as to garner a position in God's Kingdom, we must make every effort to move toward the perfection of Christ. The love of Christ will move us toward perfection. It will not erase our identities; rather our egos will be reborn anew. We will be informed and changed by His grace.

The question for us is: Can we decrease? Can we lose ourselves & gain heaven? The question is there for us to accept, reject or ignore. One would do well to heed our beloved Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "Let nothing come between you and Jesus." Peace be with you.