

***The Baptism of the Lord***  
***January 9, 2022***  
***Year of Saint Joseph***

*“After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was **opened** and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.” (Luke 3:21-22)*

In the first paragraph of the Introduction to The Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 21 November 1964), the Council Fathers established a foundation from which they would seek to re-establish a communion with non-Catholic Christian communities. The first paragraph reads as follows:

“The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but they differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ himself were **divided**. Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.”  
(Vatican Council II vol. 1, Decree on Ecumenism, General Editor Austin Flannery O.P., p. 452)

The reason for my using this selection of the Second Vatican Council today is for the purpose of reflecting upon two words: “opened” (Luke 3:21) and “divided” (Vatican 2). One may suppose I am referring to the divisions found within Catholicism (Eastern and Western) or the numerous sects of Protestantism. Although these divisions are fertile grounds for much needed reflection, I profess that these are merely symptoms of a deeper division Jesus intended to make whole through His Baptism. It is the first division found in the beginning which serves as the root for all future divisions. It is the division found within the hearts of the children of Adam which encourages us to choose ourselves over God. It is that subtle whisper resonating in your ears and mine from the great divider himself, the Devil.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent of last year, the Archbishop, in his homily, mentioned that Jesus could have stayed on the shore encouraging others to go down into the waters of regeneration. Truly, He had no need to be baptized by Saint John. Yet, He had to go. He had to make holy those waters of Baptism allowing for His grace to wash

over each of us. The division caused by man's listening to the Devil, which shut the gates to heaven, is now opened. It is our incorporation into the Body of Christ through our reception of this great sacrament, Baptism, which allows us entry into that blessed reward. The division between God and man is washed away in those holy waters. After our Baptism, we strive to remain open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit leading us to obey the commands of God following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Returning to our quote from the Second Vatican Council, Jesus neither willed nor intended these multitudinous divisions which separate His Bride, the Church. He desired, with every aspect of His Divine Person, to reunite mankind with His Father and the Holy Spirit. He will offer Himself upon the altar of the cross to accomplish this great work of our redemption. He wants you and I to open our minds and hearts to His Father and His Bride, the Catholic Church, which participates in His work of redemption. During His Last Supper in the Upper Room, Jesus prayed that mankind may be "one" as the Trinity is one. The Baptism of Jesus and our own Baptism makes this prayer a reality. Today, let us raise our voices and join with His: "May all mankind be one, one in mind and one in heart, united to the Holy Trinity in an everlasting bond of Baptismal Love."