

We Are Called

In today's Gospel, we read of **John baptizing adults** in the Jordan River. Which as we hopefully know was what the early church did, they baptize adults. And with the head of the household, so too his wife, children and servants. The custom of baptizing children became the norm after the emperor Constantine order the whole world to become Christian. So who was left to be baptized after that, well the children who would be born.

John's baptism was a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin" (Mark 1:4). This baptism of **John was not Christian baptism** as we know it.

At the time of the Baptist, many of the Hebrew people "were filled with expectation," looking for the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. John's baptism gave them a chance to prepare themselves. At the same time, John made it clear that the Messiah would bring a different baptism, one "with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Now, **Jesus showed up for John's baptism. Let me make this clear, Jesus had no need to be baptized for the repentance of sins. But, as the first act in his public life, Jesus joined with ordinary people yielding to the grace of God.**

Jesus' baptism by John sets a pattern for us. Jesus responded to the urging of the Spirit. The reign of God must be announced and established in the hearts of women and men. God's reign was fully present in Jesus. He cooperated completely with the Spirit ... the Spirit who had hovered over the waters of birth at creation and now hovered over the waters of the Jordan. It is the same Spirit who livened the waters of our baptism. "In one Spirit we [are] baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13).

Here at the Jordan Jesus committed himself to the establishment of the reign of God by his own life, in partnership with God's Spirit. And we, in our baptism, commit to continue the establishment of the reign of God within ourselves and to work for the growth of God's reign throughout the world. We say that we are "baptized into Christ." As Christ was "priest, prophet and king, so we are to live unto everlasting life."

That is an awesome and demanding responsibility. **Baptism is not initiation into an exclusive club of rights and privileges. Baptism is initiation into Christ. We “put on Christ.” That is a call and a way of life, not a membership.**

The charge of the Second Vatican Council was for each of the baptized to live fully the Christian life. And ever since the Church and her faithful have tried to figure out what it means and the depth of the baptismal commitment.

Pope Francis, in his address in Philadelphia last September, talked about the history of the church as being not so much a history of building cathedral walls as one of Christians building lives and communities of love and service. He gave the example of U.S. saint Katharine Drexel. Katharine had asked Pope Leo XIII to meet the needs of the missions after her founding of a native American school. She had asked the pope to send sisters to staff the school. Pope Leo responded, “What about you? What are you doing?” St. Katherine’s response: She went into formation with the Sisters of Mercy and a few years later founded a religious community dedicated to serving the Native and African American in this country

What about me; what am I doing? What are you doing? Are we being intentional in our Discipleship: like Christ working in complete cooperation with the Holy Spirit! Each one of us shares the baptism of water and the Spirit. Each one of us is equipped by grace, and we are sent to be Christ in the world today.

To the extent that we live and act as Christ in every corner of our lives, we, too, will hopefully hear the voice of God: “You are my [child], with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22).