

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. On the day of their baptism, the newly baptized receive a certificate, verifying that they are children of God.

A birth certificate details the names of the parents and the time and place of birth. A certificate of Baptism details the names of Godparents and day and place of re-birth.

We are born three times; of the flesh, of water and the spirit (Baptism) and, at the moment of death, we are born into eternal life.

We celebrate two funerals. Our real funeral, our real burial, happens at the moment of Baptism. We are buried with Christ in the waters of death. Our old self is buried in the tomb of Baptism, the self of selfishness, pride, arrogance, doubt, fear, hypocrisy,

lust, avarice, sloth, anger. In this moment we also receive a new nature, the nature of Christ, love, patience, charity, humility, forbearance, magnanimity, truth, meekness, holiness.

Baptism is the day when we began a new life, the day we were born again, the day we became sons and daughters of God. When a baby is born you can see her, hold her in your arms. People say. 'she has her mother's eyes' 'she has her father's nose'. But the effects of baptism are not immediately evident. Because we do not physically see anything happen at the moment of baptism, it's easy to think that nothing does happen.

is not a magical rite. It's not as if someone waves a wand and, presto, you are transformed. True, we are baptized as children of God, we become Christians, we do receive the nature of God. Ontologically, sacramentally, this is true. There is a 'DNA' change in our soul at the moment of Baptism, but this change is not immediately perceivable.

Baptism is a beginning and an end. An end to the old life of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. The beginning of humility, liberality, chastity, kindness, abstinence, patience and diligence. But any child who has been baptized does not automatically become an angel; just ask their parents! They are not now programmed to grow up to humble, kind, patient and diligent. They do not automatically obey their parents or not fight with their siblings. Baptism is a beginning, a journey that will last our whole life, an itinerary in which we can either nurture or neglect the sacrament we received.

That is why the sacrament of Baptism begins with a dialogue. The parents and Godparents are asked if they are willing to help their child grow up in the faith of the Church. They are asked if they are willing to pass on their faith. Their 'yes' must become a 'yes' on the part of the child him/herself, as he or she grows and matures, giving their own assent to the gift they have received at the moment of Baptism.

We too are invited to give our assent today, on this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Jesus did not need to be Baptized, after all, he had no sin. But he accepted to be baptized, and in so doing made himself one with us in our fallen humanity. "He who did not know sin, became sin for us" says St. Paul. We, who know what it is to live the 'old life' of resentment, of selfishness, of doubt, of anger, of lust, of avarice, or greed; are given the possibility to discover a new life in Christ. Just as Christ becomes one with us in our humanity, we, through Baptism, can become one with him in his divinity. We begin to live the life of God.

Even if we do not remember the date of our Baptism, or do not always see its effects in our life, today's Feast comes to greet all of us. May our Baptism make of us co-heirs with Christ, truly sons and daughters of God.

Fr. Sean