

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Christmas is not over! Our celebration of the Birth of Christ was just the beginning of the Christmas Season. This Season continues in the Liturgical Calendar:

We have contemplated the Holy Family of Nazareth,

We have venerated Mary as the Mother of God,

We have witnessed the Magi as they arrived in Bethlehem,

And today we see the heavens being torn open as Christ is baptized in the Jordan.

But why was Christ baptized, if he was sinless?

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that as people were baptized by John in the river Jordan “they confessed their sins.”

What did Jesus confess? Not his sins – he didn’t have any. Jesus confessed that he came to be one with sinners. God, who is without sin, has stooped down to fallen Adam, and loved him. Adam is pulled out from the pit of death.

St. Paul says the ‘sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the law, but we overcome all this through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

Death has a sting. But that sting has been taken away.

My brother priest, Fr. Mate (pronounced *mah-tay*) from Hungary, told me a story about his youth. As a young boy he was traveling in the car with his Dad. It was summer and the windows were down. A bee flew in and began buzzing all around him in the back seat. He began screaming and shouting.

His Dad said “Don’t worry, the bee won’t sting you.” Mate continued to scream and yell in panic, and his Dad tried in vain to calm him down. “How do you know it won’t sting me?” Mate asked. His Dad replied “Because it already stung me!” and held up his hand to show his son the sting that was there.

Jesus Christ has already entered into death, he has ‘been stung’ for us. Death has no more sting, no more power over Him. Death has no more power over us. Do not fear, because the sting is not there.

This is true not only physical death - which becomes a door to Eternal Life, but also the ‘ontic death’, the death of being. There are many ways we experience ontic death: the small things that figuratively “kill us.” For example, it could be the pandemic and the grip of fear it brings, and it’s not allowing us to go about our lives as we are used to; or it could be economic hardship, or it could be the sickness of a child, or one’s own sickness.

The waves of death constantly threaten us. But in Baptism death itself becomes an experience of life.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord: fear, anguish, darkness, and hopelessness, have been vanquished. God is Emmanuel – He is one with us. And we are one with Him: it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. Let us today also celebrate our own Baptism. Christ’s hands were not stung by a bee, but pierced by nails. He died for you. The condemnation that belonged to us fell on him. Death has no power over those who are in Christ. Do not be afraid, of anything. Rejoice in the Lord.