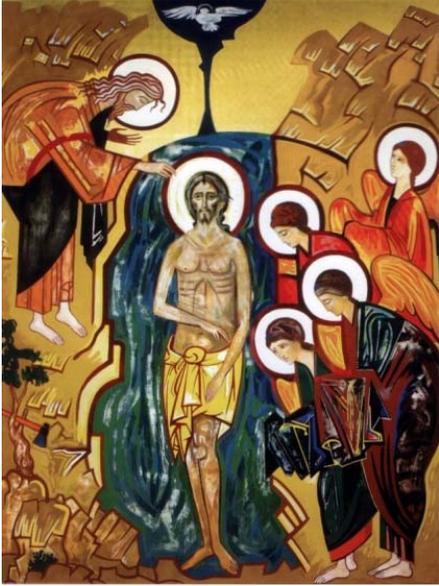


Dear Brothers and Sisters



Jesus was Baptized by his cousin John in the River Jordan. We too were baptized, perhaps not in the Jordan, but in the parish church where we grew up. We were baptized for the remittance of Original Sin. But if Baptism forgives sin, why was Jesus, who had no sin, baptized?

Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary to be one with us in everything, and even though sinless, would take upon himself the consequences of our sins. The gravest consequence of sin is death, but death is despoiled of its power in virtue of the life of Christ.

Etymologically, 'Baptism' means 'to be submerged.' In Baptism Jesus was submerged under the water. His Baptism in the Jordan is an anticipation of his real Baptism, which will take place on the Cross, when he will be submerged in his passion and suffering.

Because he is sinless, because he is not only man, but God himself, he is able to undo the consequences of sin, and to take away the power of death itself. 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.' The sting of death is vanquished.

A friend of mine, 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, but his Dad told him not to worry, "The bee won't sting you" he said. 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. When death approaches us, we need not fear, because the sting is not there. This applies 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. Ontic death means the small things that 'kill us.' It may be a situation in life, or in work, or in the family, or with health, or finances. The waters of death constantly threaten us, but in virtue of Baptism death itself can become an experience of life.

As we celebrate today the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, let us also celebrate our own Baptism. We have invited to the 10:30 Sunday liturgy all the families with babies who were baptized here this past year. Take a moment to speak with them after Mass, and join us for the 'agape,' the coffee and cake, we will share in the McCarthy Center after Mass. May our own Baptism bear fruits of eternal life in each of us today.

Fr. Sean