

The Baptism of the Lord  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
13 January 2019

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11  
Psalm 104  
Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7  
(see Mark 9:7) Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

*Baptism Is the Beginning*

Each year, for three Sundays after Christmas Day, when we gather here at church; and we see the beautiful Christmas decorations still up – the trees, lights, wreaths, poinsettias, and manger scene; we are reminded that Christmas doesn't *end* on Christmas Day. Rather, Christmas *begins* on Christmas Day!

Perhaps many of you – or at least some of you – still have your Christmas decorations up in your homes. We did have a little “Charlie Brown” Christmas Tree in the Rectory (really, a tree branch in a flower vase). It wasn't much, but we decorated it with little ornaments and lights, and it made things festive for us for Christmas. Unfortunately, it was quickly drying out and dropping needles. So, I'm sorry to admit that we had to take down our Christmas decoration in the Rectory too early this year.

When the rest of the world – when even we ourselves – have taken the decorations down and – at least in some ways – have left Christmas behind when it was just *beginning*. We come back here to church and are reminded to continue celebrating this Joyful and Holy Season.

+++

For most of Christmas Season we focus on the *beginning* of Jesus' life: the circumstances around His Birth<sup>1</sup>; the Manger in Bethlehem<sup>2</sup>; the Visit of the Shepherds<sup>3</sup>; His Holy Family – Foster Father, Joseph, and Blessed Mother, Mary<sup>4</sup>; the Visit of the Magi last Sunday.<sup>5</sup>

But in this last week of Christmas, we jump from how Jesus revealed Himself to our world as a Baby, to the many ways that Jesus kept revealing Himself to our world as a Man. And when we make that jump from Jesus the Baby to Jesus the Man, we recognize that His Birth – like our own births – was the *beginning*. That the Baby grew up to be a Man. That what we celebrate about Jesus on Christmas Day, is the *beginning* of what we celebrate about Jesus' Life. And what His Life, Death, and Resurrection mean for all of us.

+++

So, today, we *conclude* Christmas. Fittingly, we *conclude* Christmas with another *beginning*: The Baptism of the Lord. The *beginning* of His public ministry.<sup>6</sup> And we see that, what Baptism revealed about who Jesus was – so also Baptism reveals who *we* have become. Because at our Baptism: Heaven was opened for each one of us<sup>7</sup>; the Holy Spirit was given to each one of us<sup>8</sup>; and we were reborn and called beloved children of God.<sup>9</sup>

Baptism was the *beginning* of Jesus' public ministry. Baptism is the *beginning* of our new life. Whether we were Baptized as an infant or an adult, Baptism was our new *beginning* and always remains the basis of our whole life as Christians. Baptism is the gateway for us to enter into life in the Holy Spirit. It is the door that gives us access to all the other sacraments.<sup>10</sup> Especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation that continually nourish us, heal us, and make us new again – give us an opportunity for a new *beginning* – all throughout our life.<sup>11</sup>

And our Baptism is only a *beginning* for us, because, no matter what age we are when we are Baptized, or how long ago we were Baptized, or how much we knew about the faith when we were Baptized – our faith must continue to grow *after* Baptism. Baptism is only the *beginning* of a life of faith that continues to mature and develop all our life.<sup>12</sup>

+++

And just as at His Baptism Jesus was equipped for His Mission by the Father with the Holy Spirit, so we, too, are equipped at our Baptism for our mission. What is our mission?

Well, in addition to doing things that keep our own faith growing, one clear mission we have is to offer to others that same new *beginning* – that same new life – that we have been given.

We offer this new life to our own children at their Baptism. As parents, godparents, aunts, and uncles, we support our children as they grow and mature in their faith. But Jesus calls us to go out beyond our families; to go out to the whole world, baptizing all peoples.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, let us welcome our parishioner, Gisele Matthews, to share with us about an important ministry called Alpha, which begins again this Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>. Alpha is an important ministry that gives each of us an opportunity to fulfill our mission to help our family members, friends, neighbors, and even someone we've just met – to help others meet Jesus Christ. To help them receive the same gift of a new *beginning* – a new life – that we have been given by the Lord.

---

<sup>1</sup> Christmas – at the Vigil Mass (Matthew 1:18-25)

<sup>2</sup> Christmas – Mass in the Night (Luke 2:1-14)

<sup>3</sup> Christmas – Mass at Dawn (Luke 2:15-20)

<sup>4</sup> Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (Sunday after Christmas) and Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God (January 1)

<sup>5</sup> The Epiphany of the Lord (Matthew 2:1-12)

<sup>6</sup> See Luke 3:23

<sup>7</sup> Luke 3:21

<sup>8</sup> Luke 3:22

<sup>9</sup> Luke 3:22

<sup>10</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1213: “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.”

<sup>11</sup> See Revelation 21:5: “The one who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’”

Also see 2 Corinthians 5:17: “So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.”

<sup>12</sup> See CCC 1253: “Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop.”

See CCC 1254: “For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow *after* Baptism. . . . Preparation for Baptism leads only to the threshold of new life. Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.”

---

<sup>13</sup> See Matthew 28:19-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Also see CCC 1223: “All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan. After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.’”