

## Know Your Faith

GOSPEL COMMENTARY LK 3:15-16, 21-22

# Baptized into Christ

The baptism of Jesus reveals Our Lord's identity as the Son of God. This is made known through the voice of God the Father and the appearance of the Holy Spirit in bodily form like a dove. We should marvel at the fact that Our Lord choose to be baptized even though He had no need of it.



Fr. Jerome  
Magat

It's not as if Our Lord suffered from the effects of original sin. In His humanity He was perfect

and so He had no need to be cleansed and regenerated in the waters of baptism. So, one may ask, "Why did Our Lord choose to be baptized?"

St. Maximus of Turin, writing in the late fourth century, tells us that Christ was baptized not to be made holy by the waters of baptism, but rather, to make holy the waters of baptism and to purify these waters with His body so that all who would be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be cleansed of original sin and be made adopted sons and daughters of the most high God. In doing so, Christ elevated baptism to the dignity of a sacrament.

As profound as this may be, it is not enough simply to admire the events of the baptism of the Lord from afar. The event has personal, serious and very practical implications for the baptized. As the first and most necessary sacrament for salvation, baptism washes the recipient free of original sin. At the same time, the soul is infused with sanctifying grace — a stable and enduring grace that makes one an adopted child of the Father and allows for the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul. In addition, the soul experiences an infusion of the theological virtues known as faith, hope and charity. These are called theological virtues because they are the virtues that adapt man's faculties for participation in divine nature. They dispose believers to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have God for their origin, motive and object. Hence, the capacity to believe in God; desire and trust in Him; and love Him comes through the infusion of these three theological virtues at baptism.

Finally, every baptized person receives the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. These gifts are given in a potential state, waiting to be actualized. That is why parents undertake an immense responsibility when their child is baptized — they are charged with drawing out the gifts and the theological virtues that God has infused into that child's soul. In sum, every grace that any person would need in order to become a saint is received at baptism. Receiving this sacrament orients its recipient toward Christ and incorporates them into the church.

Over the centuries, many saints have asserted that the largest crisis in the church and society in general is a crisis of baptism. It is not that there are not enough baptized persons. Rather, there is a lack of persons committed to living out their baptismal dignity and actualizing their baptismal potential. This has been the challenge of every generation of baptized Christians. The need for believers to live in accordance with the great gift they have received has never been more urgent.

*Fr. Magat is parochial vicar of St. William of York Parish in Stafford.*

List the effects of Baptism which

Fr. Magat mentions.

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What does Father say is

the biggest challenge

and need of the Church and world

today?

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