

*Thoughts from the Rectory ...*

Dear friends of St. John the Evangelist,

Today, Holy Mother Church celebrates the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Over the past few weeks we have followed the development of the Christian mystery that is God's salvific mission. Having contemplated and prepared through the weeks of Advent for the coming of the Messiah in glory and in time, we rejoiced in the Nativity of the Lord, that is, the birth of the Christchild; we lauded the motherhood of St. Mary in her divinely appointed and humbly accepted role as the Mother of God; and, we feted the revelation of Jesus as the visible sign for all nations, near and far, that indeed God saves. The Christ, the Anointed One, has been foretold by the prophets, born into our human family, and revealed as the Light of the World for all who would believe. Now, with this great exposition, we are immersed as sharers of this ever great mystery.

Filled with expectation, you and I are invited to be, not just hearers of God's action, but full sharers in it. The message of Christ Jesus is not to be a legend or story merely told, but an encounter and intimacy to be fully experienced and lived in ourselves! The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the very sign of the Father's favor and our adoption as His daughters and sons!

Like our ancestors before us who would travel out of the city into the desert to be plunged in the waters by John the Baptist, we too can leave the hustle-bustle of an anxious world consumed by its selfishness and, seeking to be cleansed of former ways, be renewed and invigorated with spirit and spark. They and we seek repentance, forgiveness, and newness of life. Isn't that

why we feel a certain hopefulness at the beginning of each new year?

As Jesus was baptized in the refreshing waters of a distant river, He sanctified that sacramental action for us. You and I, drawing near to the Lord from the wastelands of our vices, can be made new, refreshed, and cleansed in a new Spirit. You and I can receive that Fatherly care and Heavenly proclamation "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" as we immerse ourselves in the Christian faith and plunge into an ever deepening and personal relationship with Christ. As Jesus comes to share our human nature, He invites us to share in His divine love and saving mission.

The Baptism of the Lord demonstrates for us not something new about Jesus, but something new about us. Now, in Him, we can share in authentic communion with the Father. Now, in Him, we can claim divine Sonship. Now, in Him, we can exercise a redeemed humanity. Now, in Him, we can work for the salvation of souls.

In Baptism, we have been plunged into the Christian mystery. How immersed are you?

*St. John the Evangelist, pray for us!*

Fr. Pierz