

Feast of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ - January 12, 2025
Homily by Fr. Erel Villanueva

And there is a thing, the feast of, the feast of the Lord, is something like a, an end up of the whole Christmas celebration from, at least from Epiphany. And Epiphany, we celebrate it last Monday, is the revelation of Jesus Christ. And that's the part where Jesus would also be revealed. And also, as I continue now in this blessed baptism, not only to be revealed, but during his baptism is now like the commissioning and the empowering for him to start his public ministry. So, with that, we also now could see also ourself in this baptism. Jesus, when he was baptized, he came to St. John in the river Jordan. And in there, he choose to be baptized, the baptism of repentance. In other scriptures, John said, no, it should be you baptizing me. But Jesus said, no, let's do what is the right thing to do. What's the righteous thing to do. And it is part of the plan of God and of his Father. And at the same time, also to prove that he is a man. Man, both man and God, and also the baptism to be, what you call, identified with us sinners. So with that, in that account, what happens, when he was baptized in the river Jordan, when he come up, the Bible says, the heaven opened and the Holy Spirit come like Adam. So, like Adam. It's just like Adam. It's not Adam, but it's like something like that. Maybe apparition, like Adam, whatever, but it's like Adam. Something symbolizing the Holy Spirit, empowering him to fulfill his will and purpose here on earth. And there, there's a voice from heaven says, you are my son, whom I love, and I'm well pleased with you. So here you could see the symbolism also of the Trinity. You cannot find the word Trinity in the Bible, but in this symbolism, Jesus, the Lord is there. And the Holy Spirit come down, and there's a voice of the Father. You could see. There is a Trinity in that event. And there, during our baptism also, the Trinity is also present with us. And after that, you could see, as it contained the word of God in the Bible, he was led to the wilderness. And that's, he was tempted by the devil, and he was strengthened by the angel, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. And that's the start of his work, public ministry. And to fulfill the purpose of God, and also his mission. So with that, we could also identify ourselves. We could identify ourselves in the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. That we as people, we believe that we are part of the kingdom of God. Baptism, as he always says, it is the sacrament of initiation. Initiation in Christian life. Or it's a start. Or it is somewhere, what is it called, a first step toward Christian life. Baptism. That's why our font was placed in the door. You could see there? Because it symbolized that baptism is initiation to Christian journey. Both of them. There are two sacraments, it's called the sacrament of initiation. That is the sacrament of baptism, and the sacrament of confirmation. So with that, we could also identify what happened during our baptism. Baptism, as you see, Jesus Christ, as obedient to his Father, he submitted to John for baptism. Baptism of repentance. And with the Holy Spirit, it strengthened him, and is now part of his mission. You could see it also that baptism is a baptism of mission.

Because he would start his work, his ministry, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
And same also with us.
During our baptism.
So listen a little to what we call catechism.
What happens during baptism?
During baptism, as our BCP would always define it, is a sacrament of initiation, where we've been, in this ritual, we've been accepted and adopted as children of God.
We become member of his body, the body of Christ and his family.
We receive the forgiveness of God.
At the same time, receive the Holy Spirit.
We identify to his death and resurrection.
Receiving the forgiveness of sin and the newness of life.
There it is.
Or you call, born again experience.
We have received the newness of life.
During our baptism.
Now, with child baptism, it is being part of the children of the parents and the ninong,
that to see to it that the child would grow in the Lord.
And after that, the child will come to his own mind that he would accept the Lord Jesus by himself.
Having now understanding, plus the training, the disciples of the parents and the ninongs,
that we call now confirmation for him that he really accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior.
That this child now, in his mind and right mind and understanding,
is now going to walk with the Lord and live his life for him.
So, with that, it is not just a ritual.
It is a baptism of commitment.
Because when you are baptized in the Lord, not only that renouncing Satan,
not only receiving the forgiveness of sin, not only receiving a new life,
but also through baptism, we declare him Lord and our Savior.
How does it happen?
In the baptism, it is a ritual or a sacrament that mostly is of symbolism.
By water, let's cleanse us of our sin.
There is what you call a candle, representing the new life.
That's why a candle was given to parents.
That candle represents both the life of that child and the new life that comes from God
that needs to be nurtured and protected.
There's the Christian. Put in your prayer, it says,
You are Christ's own forever.
Christ's own.
That means, that's not a symbol, that you make him Lord and Savior.
You are Christ's own, bought with a price.
And then you can see this white garment representing the new life.
At the same time, putting on Christ.
That's the meaning of that white garment.
Putting on Christ now.
And when we die, you know why there's white pearl above the coffin?
The same.
Putting on Christ when we are in baptism, and during death,
you're clothed with glory because of Jesus.
That's why our coffin was covered by that white pearl.
Those are symbolism that would help us, what is happening during baptism.
Baptism, with all the symbols, is what you call an outward action with the inward grace.
Receiving the inward grace.
And what is that inward grace?
Already we call it baptismal grace.
A grace from God to the power of the Holy Spirit,
that we could grow, mature in the stature of our Lord Jesus Christ.
And fulfill his will and purpose.

Through the baptismal grace that we receive.
That's why in short, my message today, baptism is not just a privilege,
but at the same time, responsibility.
Privilege in what?
During baptism we become adopted child of God.
We receive the forgiveness of God.
We receive the new life.
We identify to the death and resurrection of Christ.
We become part of the family of God.
Inheritors, co-inheritors of all the promises of God the Father.
That is what you call our privilege.
But the other side of that is our responsibility.
Because when we, during baptism, we become not only a child of God,
but a child of the King.
Now, recall the reference of being evangelical people, being born again.
You cannot see the kingdom of God unless you are born again.
You cannot see, and then you cannot enter.
You are seeing and entering the kingdom of God.
And in the kingdom of God, there is a King.
And that King is not us.
It's God.
That's why during our baptism or during so-called born again experience,
the other side of it is we learn to submit to the King.
That is our responsibility.
That is our responsibility.
A responsibility to live out as Christians.
To live out our Christian life.
To obey.
To submit.
And to serve him.
We are not baptized just to have our own thing, no.
You know that in a simple way.
In the house, when a child was born, he did not do his own thing.
He learned to submit to the mother and to the father.
This is also what we are going to do.
We submit to God our father.
We do not do our own thing.
This is called, during also baptism, remember that we have a covenant with God.
Covenant.
How do you say covenant?
Covenant.
If you have a contract, contract.
Do you have one?
Because you can still sign a contract.
But covenant is not because you have written a contract.
But a covenant between you and me.
It is a heart covenant.
A promise.
And we have to fulfill that.
We have our part of the covenant.
And that is what to make him our savior.
Yes.
And Lord, to submit and obey him.
We are not, once again, baptized to do our own thing.
We are baptized to be part of the family of God.
But at the same time, of the kingdom of God.
To learn to submit to the ways and the will of the king.
So, we say, to see and enter the kingdom of God in a more deeper meaning or a
meaning base.
Is it to understand is that you let the king rule our heart.
As we become part of his kingdom.
Or we become born again.
We now enter the kingdom.
But that kingdom ruled by the king.

It means to say, we are willing to submit and obey the king.
The king is not us.
So, we have to understand what happened during our baptism.
And today, like baptism is somewhat very important.
Because before it's that much about legal document.
Now it's a local legal document.
So, they need to be baptized.
So, they could go abroad.
Maybe you say, baptismal certificate is just a piece of paper.
But there's a meaning of that.
It means it is your proof and the proof of God.
Every time you have a baptismal certificate.
Well, you're holding a proof.
That you're a Christian.
That's privilege.
But at the same time, you're holding a proof.
But at the same time, you're holding a proof.
That you have to submit and obey God.
That every time you see a baptismal certificate.
Not only for legal document.
But it would also remind us of our covenant.
That we are under God.
That you are not just to do your own thing.
Going to church is part of the covenant.
It's not a choice.
It is our duty.
And part of the covenant.
I am your God.
You are my people.
God says.
So, to remind everything once again.
That our baptism.
Our baptism is both a privilege and responsibility.
It is our responsibility.
And most of us do not understand that.
Because if we really understand what's the meaning of our baptism.
Then it's not hard for us to obey God.
It's not hard for us to submit to God.
It's not hard for us to serve God.
Because you understand your baptism.
You're under God.
And it is our responsibility to live out our life.
To live out being a testimony of God.
Of being as a Christian.
And not being a Christian because you have a crucifix.
Not because you carry Bible.
Not because you could sing Christmas Christian song.
Or you could quote scriptures.
That is part of it.
But brothers and sisters, it's more than that.
May our life.
May our life.
Prove it.
Especially today.
Unlike before.
You see the Bible.
Like people are coming to Jesus.
Coming to Jesus.
Because there is the Bible.
They all come to Jesus.
Today.
Are people running to Jesus?
No.
Are people running to go to church?

No.
They're not.
I'm going to debate you.
Because from that time of Jesus, there's a lot of preaching.
A lot of work of the kingdom of God.
And of today's generation.
People today are looking for proof.
Evidence.
About Jesus.
We have a meeting last.
With the SIL people.
And the one who help us to translate the Bible.
So how is the Bible?
I said, not much.
The selling of the Bible is going slowly.
Why?
Because there's now in the YouTube.
You version.
You can see in the YouTube.
Or apps.
So people, why buy?
So everyone has a cell phone.
Everyone has a Bible.
What can I do with this Bible?
Well, we said, yes.
Why not lower the price?
Just lower the price.
Instead of 100, lower the price.
And, well, if that's the case, we will lower the price.
Because they said, only old people.
Only old people would read the Bible.
Young people would read in their cell phone.
So our prospective buyer now of that Bible is old people.
But anyway, whatever it is.
Bible in print or in apps.
It is part of the covenant that you have to read it and fulfill it.
And that above all, the Bible, the walking Bible is you and me.
Today, people are looking for proof.
Looking for evidence about the word of God.
Word of God in action.
Word of God in action.
It means to say that our lives really proclaim the word of God.
In our work, in our office, in our business.
Wherever we are, it is part of our covenant to proclaim the word of God in a very practical way.
And that is through our lives.
So, brothers and sisters, once again, we're reminded today of our covenant.
Of what we have entered in during baptism.
Once a part of a privileged.
But privileged has been chosen by God, not by us.
He chose us, that all of us be part of his kingdom.
In spite of who we are.
It is a very big privilege.
To receive the new life.
To receive the forgiveness.
To receive a part of the inheritance of the kingdom.
But at the same time, our responsibility.
So, as we have to check ourselves, are we doing our part of the covenant?
Are we obeying God?
Are we submitting to him?
Are we obeying his will and purpose in our lives?
That is part of our covenant.
Although God has given us what is called free choice.
Our own volition.

What to obey.
Or to obey.
But God says, obey.
Because at the end, that is something that we have to face God.
What did you do with your own free will?
What did you do?
You have all the choices to obey or not to obey.
Even God says, obey.
But it's up to us.
But at the end, this is something that we have to face and answer to God.
That's why today we have the chance once again to renew our covenant.
That's why after this, we will have what's called the renewal of baptismal vow.
After this, we will have what's called the renewal of baptismal vow.
It's not because it's like a driver's license that after 10 years, it is expired.
No.
Our baptismal does not expire.
But the renewal means because we have disobeyed.
We have not obeyed God.
That's why I know, Lord, thank you for forgiving me.
I will obey my part of the covenant.
I will submit to you.
I will obey you.
I will serve you.
That's the meaning of that.
Our covenant does not expire.
But our obedience, there, sometimes it expires.
Our submission, sometimes it expires.
That's why, once again, we renew that by praying, Lord, forgive me.
Help me, Lord, to fulfill your will and your purpose.
Let that baptismal grace, Lord, work in us to live out the Christian life that you will glorify in my life.
And you could say to me, you are my beloved son, whom I am well pleased.
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