

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTISED?

The Sacrament of Baptism is a spiritual birth that gives new sacramental life, grace and birth to our souls. In the Stable at Bethlehem, Mother Mary secretly gave birth to the human nature of Jesus. The Father's voice was silent then, but He allowed the Angels to appear to the shepherds and secretly announce the arrival of the Saviour. Jesus lived His contemplative life of prayer in secrecy for thirty years while preparing for this day. If He came forward earlier, then Herod and the people would have killed Him, before the proper hour had come. Thirty years symbolises the thirty pieces of silver that Judas would be paid to betray Him. Now, the time had come for Him to go public. In His baptism and in a very public way, Jesus enters into His sacramental birth, which will lead to the sacramental birth of His Church on earth. Hence, we now hear His Father publicly acknowledge Him as His beloved and favoured Son (Lk 3:21-22). His going down into the waters prefigures His going down into death on the Cross and emerging to the new Life of the Resurrection. The sacrament of baptism is the gateway on earth that leads us to the main gate of resurrected Life. God becomes our Father, because we are sacramentally born into the family of His Church, which is an extension of the Church in heaven. God removes the devil's mark of death and sin, which we inherited from Adam and Eve, our first earthly parents, and replaces it with His mark of eternal life and purity, and His Fatherhood. Jesus' baptism activated the beginning of His public Church ministry, as does our own baptism activate our Christian ministry. We are called to live in accordance with the spirit and not in accordance with the flesh (Rom 8:12). Baptism gives us the gift of faith, which enables us to fully respond to God's call and presence in our lives and in the Church. To reject the faith of the Church is to reject Jesus' help to save us from going to hell.

BAPTISM IS THE FIRST GATE LEADING US TO HEAVEN

Entering the river Jordan, was not for Jesus to be made holy by the water. He entered to make the waters holy for future generations to receive baptismal grace. He cleansed and purified the waters with His touch, which led the way for His Priests to bless the waters in the baptismal Church fountains. Baptism water is a consecrated holy water because it is specially blessed three times in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The pouring of the baptism water on our heads is the moment that the Holy Spirit pours out from heaven and enters our bodies, transforming us into living tabernacles where Jesus dwells. It is important that we acknowledge our divine Guest every day. Missing Mass or confessions is to show Him the utmost disrespect and betrayal. In our baptism, the Holy Spirit frees us from sin and changes our mortal bodies, made from dust and ashes, into copies of Jesus' sinless Body, sharing in His divine glory and likeness. We must believe in God and practice our faith to enter into the Kingdom of heaven. To live our lives on earth in Holy Communion with Jesus, allows the holy waters of baptism to extinguish the unquenchable fires of hell that awaits the unrepentant sinner. God bless, Fr. Brendan.