

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You who have **washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**,
who struggle **in the great tribulation**, Revelation 7:14

In the ancient prayer office called the Litany, (ELH, p. 137ff)

we pray, "...**By Your Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation... Help us, good Lord.**"

The Church has always recognized the importance of Jesus' Baptism for our salvation.

In fact, to be a witness of His Baptism was one of the parameters that the Apostles stipulated when they filled the vacant position among the apostolic band left by Judas in Acts 1[:15-26].

So let us listen with keen ears what the Lord reveals to us concerning this momentous occasion:

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."^(ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen.* (John 17:17)

One of the interesting things about the account of Jesus' Baptism is that

the Baptism itself is only mentioned; we don't hear any details about it.

We know He went down into the river, but we don't hear about how St. John performed it,

whether by dunking or pouring or sprinkling. Water was simply applied. That is all we can know.

We know that His Baptism was legitimate, as the Father declared Jesus to be well-pleasing to Him,

but we don't know what exact words St. John said at the Baptism.

Instead we hear more detail about those things that happened immediately before and after the Baptism.

Prior to the Baptism, St. John seemed to question his God-given role.

When Jesus came to him, St. John recognized Him as the Christ.

He knew Jesus to be without sin, the perfect Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

And so it made no sense to him that:

1. Jesus should come to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

and 2. That Jesus should be baptized by St. John.

St. John was correct on the first one... to a certain point.

Notice that Jesus didn't correct him saying, "No, John, I need this Baptism.

You have no idea of the things that go on in My head."

Instead Jesus' said, "**let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**"

In essence saying, "You are right, but this, too, must be done. My Father wills it."

Jesus was without sin, but this is one of the special things about Jesus' Baptism:
where you and I have our sins washed away in Baptism,
in His Baptism Jesus had our sins placed upon Himself.
And the righteousness that He speaks of is not just taking our sins away from us,
but includes His holiness being washed into the water so that when you were baptized
you received His perfection as well.

When St. John would have prevented Jesus from being baptized,
reasoning, **"I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"**,
He momentarily forgot his divine call from the Lord, and who it was that was really baptizing.

John was correct in acknowledging his sinful nature.
There he humbled himself before the Son of God.
But Jesus recognized correctly that it truly was not St. John who actually was baptizing.
True, it was St. John's voice that spoke the words and his hands that applied the water,
but it is the Triune God who truly baptizes when His servants administer the Baptism.

This is the case even now.
The pastor/person who baptized you or your child or your grandchild is not the most important part;
he is simply the instrument, the tool, that the Lord used to apply Himself to you.
The important part is that God's name is given you, as He commanded, and water is applied.
This washes away your sin. This gives you spiritual and eternal life.
This clothes you in Christ's righteousness, His perfection.
This gives you God the Father to be your Father, God the Son to be your divine Brother,
and the Holy Spirit to be your Comforter...

... Which is what we need these days, isn't it?
In these gray and latter days, we have plagues that seem to last for years.
We have wars and rumors of wars going on right now.
We have the love of many growing cold and wickedness increasing on the earth,
and not just around the world or in major cities near you,
but in your neighborhood and at your workplace.
You have loved ones who die and congregations that close.
You have the guilt of your own sins and the shame of the sins perpetrated upon you.

Yes, you need a Comforter. You need the Holy Spirit to speak our text to you so that you may know,
not just the facts about Jesus' work of salvation, but so that you may believe and understand them.
You need Him to teach you, over and over again, how Jesus took all these evils and corruption
upon Himself so that He could bear them all the way to the cross of Calvary and pay for them.
You need the Holy Spirit to re-teach you that Jesus has borne all of your sins,
and that they are finished.
You need Him to comfort you in the face of death and church closings to know that there is hope.
- Of the loved ones who have died in Christ, baptized into Him, are finally delivered from all evil
and will rise with you on the last day.

- Of the congregations that close, the Lord has not abandoned them and the individuals of them.
They are still called, and would be gathered by the Holy Spirit with His other saints,
to continue to be enlightened and sanctified in the one true faith (Small Cat. 3rd Art. Explanation)
and to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

You need the Holy Spirit to kindle in you the fire of His love so that your love, even for your enemies,
does not grow cold, so that you continue to genuinely pray for them and, if possible, to help them.
You need Him to grant you fearlessness in the face of war and plague so that you do not lose hope,
so that you are not given into fear of what man or sin's corruption can do to you,
but instead grow in your holy fear, love, and trust of the Father's grace
and the Son's complete victory over these enemies and His authority over heaven and earth.

You need to meditate, then, on the rest the account of Jesus' Baptism.

There you see the Triune God present, as He is at all genuine Baptisms.

There you see the Son come up from the water and the Holy Spirit alighting upon Him.

This is His anointing **to proclaim good news...** Luke 4:18

to set at liberty those who are oppressed by the guilt of sin, the fear of death, and the devil.

There Jesus is publicly recognized by God as the Christ to atone for the sins of the world.

There you see the heavens opened and hear the Father declare,

"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

And from this, you recognize that having been **baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ**
and all His righteousness.

You have died to sin, crucified with Christ, and therefore you will also rise with Him on the last day.

The Father no longer sees or acknowledges your sins,

for you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and have made your robes white in holiness.

What this means for you is that the Father's action and declaration for Jesus is yours as well.

He looks at you and declares upon you, **"You are My beloved child, with whom I am well pleased."**

And He opens heaven to you so that whether you face death by war, plague, or old age,
you need never fear it.

He opens heaven to you so that your sins need no longer terrify you.

He opens heaven to you so that though the world and the devil rage against you,

you see eternal glory before you and your Savior's nail pierced hands enfolding you.

Thanks be to God. **Amen**

Soli Deo Gloria