

## II EPIPHANY 2018

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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ROM. 12.6 ST. MARK 1.1



Wake up...John the Baptist tells us...pay attention...he has something to say...and it is Good News!

John the Baptist's pivotal role as the forerunner...the one who came before Jesus to get us ready for his striking appearances...is reflected in the number of times we hear his wake up call during the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany seasons.

Saint Mark tells us the Good News about Jesus began long ago with prophecies from Malachi, "God said, I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you", and from Isaiah, "Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel". These prophecies came true in the life and work of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist had attracted a large following of his own. People came to hear his message about getting their lives in order by turning away from their bad behavior and turning back to God. John encouraged his followers to get baptized with water...a showing...and epiphany...they were serious about making changes in their lives.

But John said he was not the one they should really be looking for; someone greater than he was coming; someone so great, John said he wasn't even good enough to untie his shoes. And when he came, his baptism would be better than John's, because he would baptize not just with water, but with water and the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River marks a watershed moment in his life. When Mary and Joseph found the boy Jesus talking with the teachers in the Temple in Jerusalem, he told his parents that he was doing his Father's work in his Father's house. But he was still the boy Jesus; he had to spend some time growing up. Now it was time for the all grown-up Jesus to carry out his mission of Redemption for all mankind.

When Jesus came to John and asked him to baptize him, John was confused and startled by the request. John suggested it would be better for Jesus to baptize him. But Jesus told

John not to worry and to baptize him just as he asked. Mark tells us that as Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove and God called Jesus his Son...and to listen to him.

Jesus did not need to get baptized...he is made of the same stuff God is made of...God stuff! The baptism of Jesus was an act of humility...and it established the pattern for our own baptisms with water and the Holy Spirit...the life of Jesus was one of humility and service to others...our lives must be about humility and service to others.

The Baptism of Jesus is the striking appearance that gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own baptisms...the life-changing event at which our godparents and sponsors made promises on our behalf. Like Jesus we had to grow up and mature and let the Holy Spirit go to work in our lives. And at our Confirmations, we asked God to increase the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and be epiphanies for Jesus not just in church but in every aspect of our lives.

After his baptism and his time in the desert, Jesus spent three years teaching and healing and preparing his disciples for the completion of his mission...which was to take place on a hill outside of Jerusalem. The mission God the Father sent Jesus to accomplish would lead him to the Cross; where he would be the full, perfect, and sufficient, sacrifice on our behalf...for the forgiveness of sin.

Christianity is about forgiveness and being forgiven...and that means as C.S. Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*...we need to admit we need forgiveness.

So let's wake up...as John the Baptist tells us...the News is Good...pay attention to what he has to say...show we are serious about making changes in our lives...turn away from darkness...embrace Jesus the Light of the World.

