

## II EPIPHANY 2019

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

#### ST. MARK 1.1



Did Jesus need to get baptized? Everything Jesus did was for us...not for himself. The Baptism of Jesus with water and the Holy Spirit is the model for our own baptism and our initiation into the fellowship of the Body of Christ...the Church.

The first epiphany...*the first striking appearance*...in today's Gospel is in John the Baptist identifying Jesus as the One people should get ready to receive. John tells us as good as his baptizing the people with water is...it wasn't sufficient to accomplish what only God himself could do...permanently forgive the Original Sin that had separated us from God.

The second epiphany...*the second striking appearance*...in today's Gospel is the appearance of the Holy Spirit like a dove hovering over Jesus...and God identifies Jesus as his own Son and we should listen to him. The Scriptures record only one other event in which God calls Jesus his own Son...the Transfiguration. The Baptism of Jesus and his Transfiguration are the beginning and ending of his public ministry.

Saint Mark begins his Gospel by telling us he has Good News to share with us about Jesus. We see the adult Jesus coming to his cousin John the Baptist and asking to be baptized. John was the forerunner, the one who came before Jesus, and fulfilled the prophecies from Malachi...God would send his messenger ahead of the Messiah to open the way before him and from Isaiah...that the road for the Lord should be made ready and the path straight for him to travel.

John the Baptist is Jesus' public relations guy. He tells us to get ready for Jesus by turning away from the things that make it difficult for us to receive him into our hearts. We can do that best by eliminating the baggage we carry...the heavy load Jesus tells us he will lighten and make things easier for us.

When Jesus came to John and asked him to baptize him, John initially reacts negatively to the request. John earlier had told people he wasn't good enough to untie Jesus' shoes...and he now tells Jesus he should be

baptizing him. Jesus assures John it's OK to go ahead and baptize him...it's all part of God's plan for Salvation of mankind.

The Baptism of Jesus is profoundly Trinitarian...all three persons of the Trinity are present...further confirmation Jesus is the God's Son and made of the same stuff the Father is made of...God stuff. Jesus' baptism was a pivotal moment in his life. Jesus is all grown up now...he is ready to take on the work he told Mary and Joseph he must do when he was the adolescent boy teaching the teachers in the Temple.

Saint Paul tells us in his Letter to the Philippians that Jesus didn't hesitate to become a human being like us...God's Son shows the ultimate example of humility. The entire life of Jesus is a great epiphany...*a striking appearance*. We see this in his teaching. But mostly we see this in his actions...in his love and compassion and service to others. Humility defines the life of Jesus and it is his humility we try to emulate in our own lives.

Our own baptisms by water and the Holy Spirit are equally pivotal moments for us. In baptism our sins are forgiven and our lives are forever changed...the possibility of eternal life in heaven becomes available to us. We become full members of the Church...the Body of Christ...with all the benefits and responsibilities that come along with belonging to the fellowship called the Communion of Saints. During the Mass we pray that God will bless us so *we may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him*.

Baptism is a one-time event and can't be repeated. Its effect is permanent...forgiveness of our sins and empowerment by the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us in the work we do. We continue to exercise our free will...we can choose to do what is right...or what is wrong. The choice is ultimately up to us. We can be certain God will give us all the help we need to make the right choices. We just have to show we are serious and ask for his help.

Let's ask ourselves again...what kind of life-long epiphanies...*striking appearances*...are we going to be for Jesus.

Remember...everything he did was for us!

