

**EPIPHANY II 2020**  
**SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**

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**ROMANS 12.6 ST. MARK 1.1**



Let's start with some Good News...our friend Mark tells us. It's Good News we all need to hear!

If we follow the Lectionary in the front of the *Book of Common Prayer*...and especially if we focus on the Epistle and Gospel readings...we begin to realize the entire life of Jesus is one Great Epiphany. In the Epiphany Season we get the condensed version of his life...the Cliff Notes in which Jesus' full humanity and Godhood is revealed to us through the striking appearance that define the Season. The story doesn't end with the conclusion of the Epiphany Season.

The Baptism of Jesus by his cousin John the Baptist is one of the milestones of Jesus' life. It commences the preparation for his public ministry. Mark begins his Gospel by saying he has some Good News to tell...and we need to pay attention to what he has what John has to say. John's appearance wearing animal skins must as striking as his message..."The Lord is coming...and I'm his publican relations guy."

Mark tells us that John the Baptist's mission and message of hope fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi that a messenger would come before the promised Messiah...to encourage people to get ready. They should not put up any roadblocks to get in the way of his arrival...they should get their spiritual houses in order. God was going to make himself known to us and reveal his shining light to the world (through Christ).

Mark tells us when John baptized Jesus...the heavens opened up...and the Holy Spirit appeared like a dove above Jesus. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my own Son. And I am pleased with you". This is the first event in the life of Jesus in which God identifies Jesus as his Son. The second is at the Transfiguration...which effectively concludes his public ministry.

Baptisms were not unknown within Judaism. John the Baptist was like many itinerant preachers of the day...he encouraged people to turn away from sin and destructive behavior...to come back to God. To show

they were serious about starting fresh...he asked to them to get baptized with water.

But John the Baptist made a point of telling people as good as his baptism was...it couldn't accomplish complete forgiveness of sins...it couldn't change people's lives from within...only God to do that through the power of his Holy Spirit. John the Evangelist tells us John the Baptist pointed at Jesus and said, "He's the One...He's God's Lamb who takes away the sins of the world."

The Baptism of Jesus by water and the Spirit is the model for our own baptisms by water and the Spirit. We become members of the Body of Christ and the great fellowship of the Communion of Saints and heirs through hope of the Kingdom he came to establish. Our sins have been forgiven and our lives have been changed forever.

The most important event in human history took place on Christmas Day. It was a striking appearance like no other...and we celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth in our hearts and minds and souls all year. It is God's revelation of himself through Jesus...God made flesh...the little baby who first learned to walk among us so he could grow up and show us it would be possible for us to walk with him in heaven.

Jesus doesn't limit his appearances only to the Gospel readings of the Epiphany Season. He appears to us in the Sacrament of the Altar at every Mass. He makes the most personal and wonderful epiphany every time we receive his Body and Blood at Mass. Every Mass is an epiphany in which Jesus makes himself known to us in Word and Sacrament-Sacrament and Word.

Our lives too must be epiphanies for Jesus. Saint Paul reminds us we all have gifts...special graces God has given each of us. Not all of us have the same gifts...God has given us gifts according to our abilities...and we are supposed to use them. And in everything we do...we are to love each other warmly and our love has to be sincere.

Mark said he had some Good News to tell...so do we. Like John the Baptist...we're public relations people for Jesus...and it's the best job around!

