

II Epiphany 2021
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Romans 12.6-16 St. Mark 1.1-11



During the Epiphany Season we have been talking about the various ways Jesus showed himself to the world. These showings...or appearances...are called epiphanies.

We use the word “epiphany” in common speech today to mean we found a solution to a perplexing problem...through intense study, scientific breakthrough, or some event that causes the proverbial light bulb to go off in our heads.

The truth Jesus is the Son of God is an epiphany we can't figure out on our own...God reveals it to us. The Holy Spirit we received at our baptism helps us understand what Jesus' appearances mean for us.

Today's epiphany happens at Jesus' baptism Saint Mark begins his Gospel by telling us he has Good News to share with us about Jesus. He identifies John the Baptist as the forerunner...the one who came before Jesus...fulfilling the prophecies from Malachi that God would send his messenger ahead of the Messiah to get people ready to receive him...and from Isaiah that the road for the Lord should be straight for him to travel.

We then see the adult Jesus coming to his cousin John the Baptist and asking to be baptized. John the Baptist was an itinerant preacher who had attracted a large following of his own. He told people to confess their sins to God and then get baptized by water to show they were serious about changing 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 his own, because he would baptize not just with water, he would baptize with water and the Holy Spirit.

John knew the limitations of his own baptism...the public showing of repentance and a ritual washing by the people was OK as far as it went. More had to be done if people's sins were to be truly forgiven and

they were to be put right with God once and for all.

Mark tells us when Jesus came up out of the water after his baptism, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove and God the Father called Jesus his own dear Son, whom he loved. This one of two events recorded in the Scriptures God calls Jesus his own dear Son...the other is at the Transfiguration.

At his Baptism, Jesus shows himself to be the Second Person of the Trinity and the promised Messiah of the Hebrew Bible. His baptism by water and the Holy Spirit was a pivotal moment in his life and it sets the pattern for our own baptisms by water and the Holy Spirit.

Our own baptisms by water and the Holy Spirit are equally pivotal moments in our own lives. They are life-changing events during which we become members of the Body of Christ...the Church. During the Mass we pray that God will bless us so that--we may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.

We baptize people in the Name of the Trinity and with water because Jesus tells us to. We baptize babies because the Church has always baptized babies. But it's important we remember baptism is not an ending...it is the beginning of our new lives in Christ.

When someone is baptized, the Priest and the Congregation together thank God for the gift of knowing him and of our faith in him...and we ask him to empower the person about to be baptized with the Holy Spirit...so he may be born again and made an heir of everlasting life.

At our Confirmations we say we have matured enough to make for ourselves the promises made on our behalf at our baptism. The Bishop asks God to increase in us his many gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness.

Jesus' baptism was an epiphany...our baptisms are epiphanies. Jesus shows himself to the world through his epiphanies. Let's ask ourselves how we can be better epiphanies...better showings...for Jesus.

