

II Epiphany 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 12.6-16 St. Mark 1.1-11

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This morning's Gospel begins with Saint Mark's proclamation he has Good News to tell us about Jesus Christ...the Son of God...and it began with Isaiah's prophesy God would send a messenger ahead of the Messiah to open the way for us to receive him.

Mark doesn't spend any time talking about shepherds, choirs of angels, wise men traveling from far away countries, or the twelve-year old Jesus from last week's Gospel causing Mary and Joseph to panic when they couldn't find him. He gets right to the point. John the Baptist is the messenger Isaiah was talking about and we need to pay attention to his message.

John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and an itinerant preacher who went around the countryside asking people to turn away from sinful and destructive behavior. To show they were serious about starting fresh...they should get baptized with water and God would forgive them. Mark tells us many people confessed their sins and were baptized in the Jordan River.

John's announcement to the people someone greater than he would soon arrive...so much greater he wasn't even good enough to untie his shoes...and his acknowledgement his baptizing with water was not good enough...the one who was coming would baptize them with the Holy Spirit...sets the stage for what was to happen next.

The Baptism of Jesus by his cousin John was an epiphany...a showing of who he is. When Jesus came out of the water...the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove. God declared Jesus to be his own dear Son and he was pleased with him. Saint Luke records the only other time God calls Jesus his own dear Son...at the Transfiguration. The Baptism and Transfiguration of Jesus are the beginning and ending of his public ministry.

The Baptism of Jesus is a pivotal moment in his life. According to Father Massey Shepherd, author of the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, this is the moment Jesus becomes fully conscious of his mission and vocation, and his unique Sonship to his Father. And with

the Baptism of Jesus, John the Baptist's role of the forerunner was fulfilled.

The Baptism of Jesus by water and the Holy Spirit is the model for our own baptisms by water and the Holy Spirit and our admission into the Church...the Body of Christ. We grow "from strength to strength in the life of perfect service" as the Prayer Book so eloquently states and our faith grows and matures. We too are sons and daughters who enjoy a unique relationship with God the Father through Jesus.

Our own baptisms by water and the Holy Spirit are equally pivotal moments in our own lives. They are life-changing events empowering us to do God's work...if we open up our hearts and let the Holy Spirit help us his work. 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".

Jesus lived a life full of epiphanies...showings of who he is. He lived a life of service to God and others. In his Letter to the Romans, our friend Saint Paul tells us we each have different gifts God has given us to build up the Church...the Body of Christ...so we should use them accordingly.

Our love for each other must be sincere and not disingenuous. We must work hard and not be lazy. We must share material gifts with those in need. We are happy with those who are happy. We cry with those who cry. We must never let pride keep us from doing work we might not like doing. We should never think we are smarter than everyone else.

After Jesus was baptized he became an epiphany to the world. He undertook his mission to redeem mankind. His epiphany didn't come with an opt-out clause. John the Baptist said someone greater than he would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Our baptisms with the Holy Spirit make us epiphanies for Jesus to the world...our epiphanies don't come with an opt-out clause either.

Our mission is to be ambassadors for Christ to the World...it is a mission we simply must fulfill.

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