

The Baptism of the Lord



Baptism is the moment when we are drawn into the life of the Holy Trinity – the relationship between God the Father, Christ, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. This invitation is not extended because we deserve it or have done something to merit it but is rather an extension of God's grace.

Saint Gregory the Theologian reveals an important truth about entry into the sacramental life: "Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift. It's called a gift because it's conferred on those who bring nothing of their own. It's called grace because it's given even to the guilty." Our experience of finding new life in Christ through addiction recovery and the Twelve Steps runs parallel to the spiritual grace of our baptism.

We celebrate the Baptism of Jesus Christ this Sunday and, while doing so, take the opportunity to embrace the promises of our own. From Luke's gospel, we hear:

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Baptism is the gate that makes the Christian life possible. To be Christian means to be grafted onto Christ – a status that can be hard to swallow when our behavior seems to ignore the divine. Recognizing our own powerlessness over lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and unhealthy attachments confirms the plunge taken in our baptism and our constant need for a savior. We find our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God – a seal that cannot be tarnished by sin or shame.

Just as we witnessed the magi change routes after encountering Jesus, there comes a point in our recovery journey where we cannot return to where we had come from. Sure, we can revert to old lustful patterns, but not without the place in our soul that has been claimed by God and awoken to the Good News.

Clothed in the grace of Jesus Christ while still in tune with our inherent powerlessness and need for a savior, we find identity. In fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1272) notes, “Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark of his belonging to Christ.”

The first step of recovery is a crucial starting point where the insufficiency of our human resources are brought to light. This step is a tangible way to carve space in our lives to surrender to the new life made available by God’s grace. Many of us like to think that we can achieve this work on our own and are often dissatisfied with recovery until we fully surrender.

As we begin a new calendar year, now is a great time to re-engage or begin working through the Twelve Steps. It is suggested that, while working through Step One, we write down compromising situations where our lustful behavior has put us and others in harm’s way and brought various consequences. It is a simple, yet hardly easy way of coming to terms with the darkness that our own will has propelled us toward.

Those suffering with lust addictions, sexual compulsions, and other unhealthy attachments may know too well that one symptom of our condition is denial that we do, in fact, need God’s help. Putting the work of recovery down on paper reminds us of that from which we have been delivered and aligns us with God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift, our baptism.

Reflection Questions

- In what areas of your life do you find yourself powerless and in need of God’s help?
- What helps you embrace your baptism and identity as a beloved child of God? What freedom do you find as a result?
- What is God revealing to you that you have hidden from or avoided until now?

Living the Steps Begins January 30

Join the Catholic in Recovery community as we journey together through the Twelve Steps

- Gatherings will take place via Zoom Thursdays at 8:00p ET/5:00p PT for 22 weeks (ending July 3)
- Work through the Twelve Steps of recovery integrating Catholic faith using *The Catholic in Recovery Workbook*
- Small group breakouts based on addiction type and gender
- Visit catholicinrecovery.com/livingthesteps to learn more and register

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-38

Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22