2026-01-25: 3rd Sunday of Tobe

Introduction

- Month of Tobe, the readings are all related to baptism. Then, next month in Amshir, the readings will all be about the Eucharist. These two sacraments are the center of the life of the Church and the life of the believer
- 1st Sunday - Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt: God opened the door for the Gentiles to be in the family of God. Entrance into the Church is through faith, repentance and baptism.
- 2nd Sunday - The Blessing of Keeping the Word of God
- 3rd Sunday - Christ's Baptism and John's Baptism
- 4th Sunday - Healing the Man Born Blind

Background

- There are three kinds of baptism:
  - The Jewish Baptism
  - The Baptism of John
  - The Christian Baptism

Jewish Baptism

- These are the ritual washings of the Old Testament
  - These were meant to clean the bodily impurities, but NOT to remove sins
  - "And whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening." (Leviticus 15:5)
  - But if you committed adultery, or stole, or murdered, etc. this did NOT free you from guilt; this did NOT justify you
- 1st Century Judaism
  - Renovated the Temple and built many pools around it - people would be coming from all around the Mediterranean to celebrate the Feasts, and after coming through Gentile places and through all of the preparations they needed to do for the feasts, they all needed to be washed.
  - The Law required ritual washings, but the scale of the pilgrimage made it necessary to have many pools.
  - Pools were built all around the Temple that large groups can go in and out and continue into the Temple to do their business or offer their sacrifice

Baptism of John

- More sublime than the Jewish Baptism, but not at the level of the Christian baptism
- A bridge between the two
- A baptism of repentance - "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8)

- John was not giving the Jews any ritual purification but he exhorted them to repentance - convert from vices to good deeds
- John's baptism was incomplete - it did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness of sins; it was powerless to absolve sins.

- "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matthew 3:11)

- Acts 19
  - St Paul asked at Ephesus if the disciples had received the Holy Spirit when they believed
    - “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”
    - “Into what then were you baptized?”
    - “Into John’s baptism.”
    - "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance," - repentance, not remission of sins - "saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”
    - When they heard *this,* they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them
  - If it were not incomplete, would Paul have baptized them again and placed his hands on them?

The Christian Baptism

- Now we have something different - this is a baptism that manifests great grace

- Sets us free from sin
  - We are all born with the Original Sin
  - “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5)
  - "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)
  - "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16)

- I become a renewed creation
  - "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6)
    - If you are flesh, you will die. But if you are spirit, you can have eternal life!
  - "Take off the old man and put on the new and superior one" (????????)
  - "That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26)

- Makes us One with Christ

    - He is the Bridegroom and I am the Bride - "the two shall become one"
    - Oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ
    - His righteousness becomes my own righteousness: If a very very poor girl married a very very rich man, so in him, she becomes rich. In the same way, we are sinners; we are defiled - but in Jesus Christ, when we are one with Him, His righteousness is considered our righteousness. We become righteous in Him.
    - Romans 9:30-31 - the importance of seeking righteousness in believing in Christ
    - Be perfect as My Father is perfect

- Become children of the Father
    - The Bridegroom is the Son of the Father; when we are united with Him, we become children of the Father
    - This adoption, the grace of sonship, is granted to us through our union with the Son of God
    - Romans 8:15-17 - "but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him,* that we may also be glorified together."
    - We inherit the Kingdom of God
    - "As You have bestowed upon us the grace of sonship through the washing of rebirth and renewing of the Holy Spirit, so make us worthy now also that we may entreat You, O Abba Father" - Fraction for Theophany
    - "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 3:36) - last verse of the gospel

Conclusion

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1)

See the great grace that the Lord has given us because of His love. Forgiveness of sin. Renewal of our nature. Unity with His Son. Adoption into His Family. Inheritance of His Kingdom.

May the Lord grant us to treasure this gift that we have, the gift of baptism. May He grant us to live out our baptismal commandment that we may inherit eternal life.

Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

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