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## BAPTIZED IN CHRIST

Lent is a season of preparation and of remembrance. It leads us through a forty-day journey on a route laid out for us by a Redeemer whose feet touched this earth twenty-one centuries ago. All along our way now, Jesus is disclosing Himself to us in the Gospel narratives. His human history intersects with our day-to-day lives.

After Vatican II, a three-year cycle of scripture passages was carefully arranged by liturgical scholars to instruct us and introduce us in a fresh way to the Paschal mystery. This year we move with Cycle A. While every liturgical year emphasizes our initiation into Christ, Cycle A is especially focused on the sacrament of baptism.

Candidates enrolled in RCIA (the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) prepare for their full incorporation into our Catholic Church and we walk beside them, rejoicing in the invitation they have accepted. "Let the one who is thirsty come forward. Let all who desire it accept the gift of life-giving water" (Rev 22: 17). We ponder our own baptism, too, and how it transformed us, making us children of God as brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Do you remember the day when the baptismal waters flowed over you? Most of us don't. We were much too young to understand, but years later we did comprehend something of what occurred in those blessed moments. It is a day worth celebrating just as we do for our birthdays. On that date we were "begotten of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5).

In the gospel we heard on the second Sunday of Lent as narrated by the evangelist Luke, "Jesus took Peter, John, and James, and went up the mountain to pray" (Lk 9:28). The ascent was not easy. The foursome were probably on Mount Horeb which would require close to six hours of uphill climbing. The Transfiguration about to take place at the summit of Horeb is an episode filled with glory. The sacred humanity radiates the divine nature to which it is united in the Person of Jesus. At the same time "Moses and Elijah appeared in glory" (30,31). Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is My Son, My Chosen One" (35). By our own baptism we are chosen to become members of Christ through a bath of regeneration. Now we are marked with His features as members of His Mystical Body. Baptism introduces into our very depths a glory that no earthly vision can grasp. If the inner reality of a baptized Christian were to shine out, the light would dazzle our human eyes. Like the three disciples we would be overwhelmed.

Peter, James, and John were being strengthened on Mount Horeb for what would overwhelm them in a wholly different way when their leader would be led forth to His crucifixion. None of this could they foresee.

Through our baptism, all the mysteries of Jesus become ours in a supereminent manner. We enter into His dying and His rising from the dead. The term *baptism* comes from the Greek word meaning to *dip* or *immerse*. Since Vatican II, a special emphasis has been placed on this sacrament that makes us "other Christs." For a full

Christian initiation, baptism leads onward to the sacraments of confirmation and the Eucharist. We have become part a worshipping community, the Body of Christ as the People of God.

The wonder of the Transfiguration was not a solitary experience. Three companions of Christ shared what was communicated. The sacraments, imparted to us individually, join us in a deeper union with all the followers of Jesus. "Christ gave Himself up for her (the Church) to make her holy, purifying her in the bath of water by the power of the word" (Eph 5: 25,26).

The symbol of water releasing us from the stain of sin speaks in many facets of meaning. Here in Maine where water hugs our coastline and fills a multitude of our lakes and rivers, we vibrate with the frequent references in Scripture. Water cleanses us, satisfies our thirst, helps living things grow. It makes travel swifter. All this the waters of baptism do spiritually.

Our baptism is a beginning, a call to newness of life. Energized by the Holy Spirit we climb every mountain this ongoing year will present to us. We take each upward step with our Savior. When we stumble, He is there to raise us again. Jesus who was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, reveals Himself to our inward gaze in every prayer that seeks Him.

**"Let my heart rejoice in Your salvation. Let me sing of the Lord, 'God has dealt tenderly with me'" (Ps 13:6).**

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