

The Baptism of Our Lord, Year of the Lord 2019
 Luke 3

**“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
 Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”**
**“Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!
 Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee!”**

Luke 3:15–22 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

In the Name of Jesus:

David’s Son and David’s Lord was baptized; Saint Luke puts it as just a matter-of-course: Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened...

As if sinners in the water and Sinless God were now joined in One Man now and for good. We are!

The heavens were opened... A gentle word. Later, Saint Luke recorded an opening more violent, ripping and tearing, leading to death:

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. ¹

Mocked as King at His Crucifixion, with only a death-row comrade looking forward to the Kingdom that such a one could rule—how does He pray, with all boldness and confidence as a dear child to a dear Father? He had, my dear ones, no less that what WE HAVE, our CONFIDENCE: the Word spoken over HIM at HIS washing day: 'You are My Son! With you I am well pleased!' And THAT is how He breathes His last?! Nor good nor bad wanted such a King! Yet He repeated His nightly prayer—no doubt, as mother Mary had taught Him from His infancy—and Saint Luke uses the more kindly expression, the euphemism—to free us to do the same—He breathed His Last!

For this, my dear ones, we are ALL baptized! NOT by John, in preparation, water only. But with the Fire that IS The Holy Spirit of God, now poured out from Such a King! King for the man who asked to be remembered when He came into His Kingdom. Saint Luke has the happiest name for Him in His Gospel! 'The Friend of sinners!'

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 23:44–46). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Let's make this short and sweet today, dearly beloved.

Christ the King's Baptism makes way for OUR washing too: NOT a removal of anything external like dirt, or even INTERNAL, like wiring gone wrong, core gone rotten, soul gone twisted. No! But a claim, OUR claim, with all boldness and confidence, that our Unseen God, our dear Father of heaven, would GRANT us a good conscience, as a gift, not as something earned.

Or, as Saint Paul teaches in the Romans lesson today: If you want to DO something with your Baptism, with your Christian Life, FOR God, then COUNT YOURSELVES dead to sin, but alive to God IN...CHRIST...JESUS!

'Pastor, please tell us in the simplest form how to do this!'
My pleasure!

You, dear baptized children of God, are free now and forever from the tyranny that we place upon our children for some reason. That tyranny is spelled S...O...W...W...Y! 'I sowwy!' You, child of God, are now and forever emancipated from ANYTHING that smacks of THAT!

'He who seeks to save his life will lose it! But he who loses his life for Me and for the Gospel will keep his life now and for good!'

You do know, beloved, that 'I sowwy' is almost every last time uttered NOT for the sake of the one upon whom violence has been inflicted! It is almost every last time dragged out of children, us, those ready for sentencing—for

the sake of the violence-doers! To save themselves....from death; or a fate WORSE than death, like a time-out or early bedtime.

‘I sowwy’ don’ fix nothin’, my friends. Yes, I suppose that ALL the tools in our shed are bent and broken; and that we need to try in some way to have some manner of conscience come alive in the violent little sinners we inflict upon our fellow man.

As my years begin to sputter out, I am only more convinced that I have never seen ‘I sowwy’ lead to one change for the better; MEAN...ING, FOR...THE...OTHER!

But....

IN...THE...CHURCH—there’s the place I have seen the other removed from violence to the King’s pleasure garden of Paradise. It may even be attended by the weak and dangerous ‘sowwy’ of which I am suspect. But the Conscience of God, the Law, has only ONE suggestion for us when we do violence against the children He made and saved and cleanses and loves: save your breath; stop your breath; breathe your last.

Or, as Saint Paul writes—seemingly with joy unbounded!—DIE! Stuff your ‘sowwys’ in a sack and move from idolatry to God, from earth to heaven, from here to there: for the next man!

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

And: Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

And if WE want to add something, ANYTHING, PLEASE!, to the WORK of setting ourselves right with God ‘n man again, Saint Paul wrote what he taught Saint Luke to write in the Gospel: So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

No doubt, we can find happier, VICTIM-oriented utterances to apply to those bloodied and bruised and broken by our violence! ‘You deserve better! Pity me! Christ is your King; pray that He be mine too!’

Those are the squeaks and squeals of the newborn infant craving more spiritual milk. The baptized, seeking more and more cleansing from God AND from man.

Our CONFIDENCE being NOT that WE will win over those we have crashed into and smashed up and then run from the scene—FOR...OUR...SAKE!

Our CONFIDENCE, is our Jesus. Who was born as we are all born; then nursed as we are nursed; then baptized, while all the others were being baptized; then was buried as we are destined; and then, raised to live with His Father in Paradise now and for good—as we all must be!

So says your Baptism into Christ. So says His Body and His Blood. So says your comrade Christians, who cry to heaven for mercy with you. And so says the One Who taught us to pray: ‘Dear Father! JUST as we have ALREADY AND FOR GOOD, swept and washed away

and flooded with pardon and mercy each and every act of violence done against us, YOU now follow our lead, and pardon us the same way!’

That IS your prayer, child of God, because you have been baptized at the authority, at the Name, of Jesus. Amen.