

## Fr. Simon Sez

This Sunday, we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Liturgically, it is a very unusual one. It marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It is both, at the same time, a Christmas event being a revelation of God as the promised Messiah and Savior to come into the midst of His people in a most humble way and the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus which we celebrate in Ordinary Time where Jesus associates Himself with sinners who are willing to repent.

John baptizing in the Jordan River is the scene with crowds responding to his call to repentance to prepare for the coming of the Anointed One (the Christ) of God. They are longing for their salvation necessary due to their sins and to begin new life as adopted children of God.

When I was on a Holy Land Pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year 2000, I couldn't wait to go to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. I envisioned it to be a grand, majestic river, fitting for the Baptism of Jesus, our Lord and our God. Like many people, I was very disappointed that we did not go to the probable location, and the river was very dirty. I hesitated to take any water with me so that I could do baptisms with it after I returned to my parish. It would be embarrassing to have this dirty water in the Baptismal Font!

I decided to take dirty Jordan River water home with me anyway. Isn't that the point? Jesus stepped into that mucky water to be united with us. This is where He found sinners willing to repent, in the midst of our mucky lives and souls. The Good News is that Jesus associates Himself with we sinners anyway! He came not to cleanse our outer self but our inner self through the physical sign of the ordinary water of this earth. This cleansing is necessary so that we can live the new life of God's grace that flows like the grand, majestic river that we do envision and that St. John envisioned in the Book of Revelation.

May we all respond to God's call of repentance out of our mucky lives of sin, not only to be washed clean but to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire!



I registered for the diocese March for Life pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. I will be gone next week January 19 - 23 along with three high school youth disciples from Sacred Heart Parish. Pray for this pilgrimage! You can go to [www.marchforlife.org](http://www.marchforlife.org) or watch it live on the EWTN Global Catholic Network ([ewtn.com](http://ewtn.com)).

## THE ANOINTING: SCOTT HAHN REFLECTS ON THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD



Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7  
Psalm 29:1–4, 9–10  
Acts 10:34–38  
Luke 3:15–16, 21–22

The Liturgy last week revealed the mystery of God's plan—that in Jesus all peoples, symbolized by the Magi, have been made “coheirs” to the blessings promised to Israel. This week,

we're shown how we claim our inheritance.

Jesus doesn't submit to John's baptism as a sinner in need of purification. He humbles Himself to pass through Jordan's waters in order to lead a new “exodus”—opening up the promised land of heaven so that all peoples can hear the words pronounced over Jesus today, words once reserved only for Israel and its king: that each of us is a beloved son or daughter of God (see Genesis 22:2; Exodus 4:22; Psalm 2:7).

Jesus is the chosen servant Isaiah prophesies in today's First Reading, anointed with the Spirit to make things right and just on earth. God puts His Spirit upon Jesus to make Him “a covenant of the people,” the liberator of the captives, the light to the nations. Jesus, today's Second Reading tells us, is the One long expected in Israel, “anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and power.”

The word messiah means “one anointed” with God's Spirit. King David was “the anointed of the God of Jacob” (see 2 Samuel 23:1–17; Psalm 18:51; 132:10, 17). The prophets taught Israel to await a royal offshoot of David, upon whom the Spirit would rest (see Isaiah 11:1–2; Daniel 9:25).

That's why the crowds are so anxious at the start of today's Gospel. But it isn't John they're looking for. God confirms with His own voice what the angel earlier told Mary: Jesus is the Son of the Most High, come to claim the throne of David forever (see Luke 1:32–33).

In the Baptism that He brings, the voice of God will hover over the waters as a fiery flame, as we sing in today's Psalm. He has sanctified the waters, made them a passageway to healing and freedom—a fountain of new birth and everlasting life.