

Mark 1:4-11 (Baptism of the Lord; Theophany)

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Every year, on the Epiphany or the baptism of the Lord, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as the Anglican Church in England, hold several special services. The first one is to consecrate the water of the baptismal font for baptism. Second, it is traditionally to have the baptism of children. The church reminds the children's parents and godparents about the meaning of baptism, and emphasizes the role of parents in the cultivation of children's faith.

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The third service is to place a cross in a river near the parish and bless the river, because in the past, a lot of rivers were used for irrigation and drinking. For example, since 2004, the congregation of the church on the north side of London Bridge and those on the south side have marched towards each other and met in the middle of the bridge after morning prayers. In this position, the priests will bless the river, that is, the River Thames, and throw a cross into the river.

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In Ukraine or Russia, a cross made of ice will stand outside the church, and a pool filled with water will be placed in front of the cross. The priest will bless the water and then invite the congregation to drink it, and use containers to carry some water home. The water will also be given to people who are sick at home, and it will even be stored for fire prevention. Some parishioners also jump into the pool to get themselves covered in the holy water. You will see that different rituals and traditions in the churches around the world have been developed from the celebration of the baptism of the Lord, or Epiphany. People regard Jesus' baptism and the epiphany of the Trinity God as bringing great blessings to the world.

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Looking at the content of today's gospel, in the baptism of Jesus, there is one thing we need to pay attention to, which is the descending of the Holy Spirit. The descending of the Holy Spirit is like the scene when a king is covered with oil in his enthronement. God's Spirit and power fill Jesus Christ. Originally, baptism was for sinners to repent, ask for forgiveness of

sins, and seek cleansing; here, it became a solemn ceremony for the installation of the Son of God and the anointing and consecration of Jesus.

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The baptism of Jesus is very similar to the cleansing ceremony. According to the instructions of the Laws, for the priest, the purification ceremony is the ritual done before the priest serve the Lord, or the ritual done before the high priest prepares to be responsible for the sin-offering on the Day of Atonement. The cleansing ceremony symbolizes the change of status and role and the renewal of spirituality. After Jesus Christ was baptized, he began His work of redemption and became the high priest of the world. He started to teach the truth, heal the sick, and help all those oppressed by the devil.

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Next, we see that during the baptism of Jesus, the sky was torn apart and a voice came from heaven. Similar scenes often occurred to prophets in the Old Testament. When a prophet was called and sent by God to do something or proclaim an important message, the prophet usually saw a vision from heaven and heard the voice of God. When Jesus was baptized, he received the prophethood at the same time. So, we see that God intervened in the entire baptism process of Jesus, witnessed for Jesus, used human institutions and traditions to express the identity of Christ, gave Jesus Christ the status of king, priest, and prophet, and established the mission of Jesus Christ.

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Therefore, for believers, being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ brings a new creation, a new beginning, and a new life. Some living habits and thoughts need to be changed and renewed. Let the Holy Spirit leads to start a new role, take up a new mission, and see things from God's perspective. As a Christian, his life should not be in a state of lying flat, but should experience transformation, breakthrough, and renewal as the Holy Spirit leads him. St Leo the Great, the fifth-century Pope, once said: "Christian, remember your place! Do not forget that Christ has rescued you from the power of darkness and moved you into the light of the Lord. " Amen.