

There is a story told of St. Patrick, the bishop, who had been traveling through Ireland, converting many people to the faith. One day, he passed through the region of Munster, where he met **Prince Aengus**, a local ruler who had already heard about Christianity and desired baptism.

As part of the ceremony, St. Patrick carried his **crozier**, the traditional staff used by bishops, which often had a sharp metal point at the bottom to allow it to be planted into the ground. During the baptism, as Patrick was focused on the sacred prayers and rites, he stuck his crozier into the ground beside him. However, instead of piercing into the soil, the sharp point of the crozier went straight through **Prince Aengus's toe** causing a deep wound.

Aengus did not cry out or complain but stood silently, enduring the intense pain. His face turned pale, but he bore the suffering with remarkable composure. St. Patrick, engrossed in the baptismal ceremony, remained unaware of what had happened until the end of the ritual. When he turned to get hold of his staff, he noticed the blood on the ground and realized what he had done.

Horrified, Patrick asked the prince why he hadn't said anything about the injury. Aengus responded saying

**"I thought it was part of the baptism ceremony."**

Today we celebrate the **Baptism of the Lord**, a feast that marks the end of the liturgical season of Christmas and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. This moment is greatly significant, as it reveals Jesus' solidarity with humanity and inaugurates His mission.

Why did Jesus enter the River Jordan to be baptized by this strange prophetic figure? Jesus wanted show solidarity with God's sinful people right at the beginning of His ministry. He had

no need of, John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins because He was without sin. Yet, just as He would later eat with tax collectors and sinners, just as He would be crucified between two sinners, so now, right at the beginning of His ministry, He enters the waters of Jordan with sinners.

The story of St. Patrick we heard in the beginning though initially amusing, reveals a profound truth: pain and sacrifice are intrinsic to baptism. Baptism is not merely a joyful ritual; it is a life-transforming commitment that involves the cross. Just as Aengus silently bore the pain, Jesus' baptism signified His willingness to embrace the suffering and sacrifices of His mission, for the sake of sinners.

### **Baptism as a Beginning**

John the Baptist declares that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This was a more powerful form of baptism than John's baptism with water.

>>>Jesus walks with us to immerse us in the life of His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God's love.

>>>He journeys with us to ignite a divine fire deep within our hearts, the fire of God's love.

We all are familiar with this prayer: "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love. This is what spirit does in baptism.

The first time the Lord immersed us in the Holy Spirit, and kindled in us the fire was on the day of our baptism. Just as the day of Jesus' baptism was a new beginning for Him, so the day of our baptism was a beginning for us—

>>>>the day when we began our lives as members of the Lord's family, the Church,  
>>>>when we became temples of the Holy Spirit, and,  
>>>>became sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus and of all the  
baptized.

Saint Paul says, with reference to baptism, "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son and daughter." The same Spirit who came down upon Jesus at His baptism came down upon us all, on the day of our baptism. God who said to Jesus at His baptism, "You are my Son, the beloved, my favor rests on You," says to each one of us on the day of our baptism, "You are my son, my daughter, my favor rests on you."

God's favor that rested on us on the day of our baptism never leaves us. We remain God's beloved sons and daughters throughout our lives, regardless of what we have done or failed to do. The divine fire that was kindled within us on the day of our baptism never goes out completely. It is ,waiting for the breath of the Spirit to fan it into a living flame.

Because God never withdraws His favor from us, because we remain sons and daughters of God, we can say, not just, "I was baptized" but "I am baptized." We never lose our baptismal identity, and our baptismal call remains the deepest truth of our life. If so what are the steps we need to take to live out our baptism.

1. **Embrace Our Identity:** Through baptism, we are declared God's beloved children. Like Jesus, we hear the Father's voice affirming us: "You are my son, my daughter; my favor rests on you." This identity is not earned but freely given, and it forms the foundation of our relationship with God. Realize and embrace this truth.
2. **Seek Continuous Conversion:** Baptism is not just a one-time event but the start of a lifelong journey. Like Prince Aengus, who endured pain for what he believed to be necessary for his faith, we are called to embrace the sacrifices and challenges that come with living a Christ-centered life. Conversion means turning away from sin and constantly realigning our hearts with the Gospel, no matter how difficult that might be.
3. **Engage in Service:** Just as Jesus' baptism was the beginning of His ministry, our baptism calls us to go beyond ourselves and serve others. By sharing God's love in our words, actions, and attitudes, we fulfill our mission to bring light and hope into the world. The Spirit empowers us to be the hands and feet of Christ in our daily lives.

May this celebration of the baptism of the Lord inspire us to live our Christian life faithfully.