

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ  
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma  
YEAR B - 1ST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY - BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Delivered by Tau Phosphoros  
to the Parish of St. Ambelain  
on January 11, 2015

Today, my brethren, we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord. Baptism, as one of the seven sacraments of the Church, is therefore a pillar of the Christian religion in all its forms. The Church - and I use this term in a general, universal, and archetypal sense - holds baptism to be of primary importance; so much so that, according to Thomas Aquinas, even a heathen may baptize in an emergency so long as he intends to do what the Church does.

So, why does baptism take such precedence? What does baptism accomplish that, among a Church that places such critical importance upon the necessity of maintaining a valid apostolic succession for the effective transmission of the sacraments, even a heathen may perform the rite? Simply, it is a purification rite. It is a cleansing of past transgressions - and, in the case of the Roman Catholics, original sin - and a formal commitment to the pursuit of righteousness. This is John's baptism - the "baptism of repentance," as our reading from Acts says, or the "baptism for the forgiveness of sins," as stated in our Gospel from Mark.

Now, we preserve the baptism of John, but we are Christians, so we also accept the rectification of the sacraments by Jesus Christ. The Christian baptism, therefore, not only purifies us and closes us off to the destructive Satanic, archontic, and Demiurgic influences, but also opens us to the vivifying grace of the Holy Spirit. Do not think, however, that baptism grants some sort of once-and-for-all instant salvation. As Gnostics and Initiates we know that one cannot merely mutter some words of contrition (no matter how heart-felt they may be), beg for salvation, get sprinkled (or dunked) and - Poof! Instant transformation, as if you were zapped by a Disney wizard or an anime magical girl. Rather, baptism initiates a process; a long and arduous process that is filled with challenges, dangers, and most of all, hard work.

The seal of protection placed upon the baptismal candidate shields the newly elect from disruptive forces. But the true seeker of Gnosis should not view this seal as a permanent condition. As the initiate grows in knowledge and divine power, that initial seal gradually weakens. For it is only by confronting the forces of darkness that we may gain mastery over our own selves, and in winning that victory become full participants in the divine nature.

We are a spiritual knighthood, and it is upon us to do battle against the spiritual forces of darkness. Our own soul - the very seat of consciousness - is our battleground. But we must also remember that the seal of baptism remains as our strong defense, and it gives way only gradually as we gain our spiritual armaments.

So take heart my brethren, and have faith in our Lord's baptism, for it has laid open the way for us. Remember often your baptismal vows, and seek always the path that leads to Light and Life, and shun that which leads the soul into darkness and death. For one day you will find yourself in the midst of that very darkness and death, and you yourself must embody that Light that guides rightly.