

(Brief) Homily on Theophany

January 19, 2008

Recount Gospel story: the Baptism of Christ

Why is it called Theophany? Catechetical answer:

- God revealed Himself in the Holy Trinity (Tropar).
 - [Not the first time: the burning bush]
- Christ revealed to the world as the Son of God, beginning of public ministry

What does it mean for us, today, making our way through a difficult world?

- True Theophany is something even greater than these things (above)

Explain this by comparing two Baptisms: that of the flood, and that of Christ (Old Testament vs. new Testament)

The Baptism for the Cleansing of Sins

- Noah's times were evil, the people were wicked
 - God gave the flood to cleanse the world of sin
 - To give us a new start, an opportunity to live well
 - Began well, but soon degenerated
- The flood literally purged the world of sin
 - This is also found in the baptism of ritual cleansing
 - And that of St. John the Baptist: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." (St. Mark 1: 4-8)
 - Which brings us to the Baptism of Christ

The Baptism of Christ: the remaking of the world and man

- The Old Testament baptism wiped away sins,
 - It did not enable man to overcome his sinful nature
 - Or the sinful world he had created around him
- The Baptism of Christ DOES BOTH
 - Man overcomes his sinful nature because the "heavens have been opened up to him" through Christ. Baptism puts to death the old man (Adam) and puts on the "new man" (Christ). This man has unlimited potential for perfection.
 - But what of the world? It has been warped by millennia of sin. It threatens to tempt even the "new man" (baptism of tears? – if time)
 - The world itself is transformed in Christ. The waters of the Jordan were CHANGED when Christ went into them (prayers of Theophany).
 - Given salvific powers. From purging to healing.
 - This is God's vision for the world – that it be remade in perfection for our perfection. WE HAVE A FORETASTE NOW (Matter – sacraments)

This, then, is the FUNDAMENTAL THEOPHANY celebrated today:

- The revelation of God's love for us and his world, that He made "Good" and is restoring to that goodness and perfection through His Son, Jesus Christ.