

BAPTISM

—According to Saint Gregory Palamas—

The grace we receive during holy baptism is God Himself.

Christ, as a human, was not in need of purification—for He was born from the immaculate Virgin and lived without any sin. Nonetheless, since He was born for our sake, He also was baptized for our sake.

Christ was baptized for the following reasons: i) in order to be obedient to Him Who sent John forth on this mission, just as Jesus stated, **“thus it is appropriate for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt. 3:15)**; ii) so He could be revealed to the world; iii) in order for His baptism to become the starting point of His salvific teaching; iv) in order to assure everyone who would subsequently be baptized, in accordance to His example and commandment, that they would receive the Holy Spirit; and v) in order for Him to personally render baptism a purifying medicine that would subsequently be able to cleanse us of the toxins deposited within our soul as a result of a passionate conception and sinful lifestyle.

Christ is thus baptized by Saint John the Forerunner. And as Christ comes out of the waters the heavens are opened for Him; and the voice of the Father from heaven is heard proclaiming, **“This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17)**; and the Spirit of God descends upon Him in the form of a dove, in order to indicate to all who were present that the testimony coming from above is directed at Christ. In this manner, Christ is revealed to be a true Son; the Father in the Heavens is revealed to exist as a true Father; and the Holy Spirit is revealed as an entity Who proceeds from the Father and Who rests upon the genuine Son of the Father. The grace of Christ and of His Father and of the Spirit thus becomes situated within the baptismal waters, so that all they who are subsequently baptized according to Christ’s example are simultaneously reborn, divinely renewed, and mystically refashioned. Thereafter, they are no longer descendants of the old Adam (as to inherit from him the curse), but having now been born through the new Adam they receive from Him the blessing. For they are no longer children of the flesh, but children of God, **“who were born not of blood or from the desire of the flesh or from the desire of man, but they were born from God through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:13)**.