

The weather has been lovely lately, hasn't it? I think it's been 3 weeks since we've had snow or rain and it's amazing how sunshine + fair weather make life a little easier. Rain, snow, and ice throw an obstacle in our way and challenge us to summon our strengths to face the elements. Water is a natural symbol of confrontation, so it is significant that Jesus begins his public life with a baptism in flowing water - It marks a rite of passage for him into a new sphere of confrontation.

In stories + in art, water is often used as a symbol of passage. I saw White Nights this week with Mikhail Baishnikov + Gregory Hines. I'm not highly recommending the film - the dancing is wonderful but the rest is not so good. Still, it's interesting to note the story-teller's use of water at key moments when the characters try to escape the Soviet Union. Baishnikov first tries to climb out the window near the showers. Hines tells his wife of the escape plans as she washes her hair. The characters finally meet their rescuers after crossing a bridge over one of the canals in Leningrad. I don't know if the writer had this in mind, but you see we spontaneously turn to water as a symbol of passing into a new life.

Baptism marks the passage into Christian life. Whether it happens to the infant or the adult, it is entrance into the life of Christ. One who is baptized has the promise of eternal life and the responsibility toward an earthly life which follows Christ. To be baptized is to accept the challenge to turn the other cheek, to care for the needy, to preach the Gospel. Our baptism is so important to our lives that each year on Easter Sunday we renew our baptismal vows to verbally re-commit ourselves to our faith.

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For many of us, baptism is a forgotten sacrament, but its significance is so great that we need to remind ourselves of it frequently.

We have a reminder - in fact we never walk into Church without it. Those holy water fonts at the doors are not to wipe smudge off our fingers. They are reminders of baptism, strategically placed at a door to mark our passage into the church from outside. Holy water reminds us not only of the baptism we did receive, nor just of the eternal life we hope for. It tells us that we accept our call to follow Christ and recommit ourselves to the demands of our baptism.

12 i 86 Baptism of the Lord Not.