Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ***Romans 6:3-4***

Baptism of Jesus The Shofar Consequences

Decisions have consequences

Here is something I only recently came to appreciate, something of great importance to all disciples of Christ: one way Scriptures show us that words and deeds have consequences is its use of the word "**therefore**" (1,039 times depending on your English translation). Once it is pointed out, the above observation becomes obvious. For example, "***Therefore*****,** having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "There is, ***Therefore***, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"(Romans 8:1). "***Therefore***, do not be anxious for tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34). "***Therefore***, do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31). "***Therefore*****,** however you want people to treat you, so treat them" (Matthew 7:12). "***Therefore*****,** let us not judge one another anymore" (Romans 14:13). "***Therefore***, do not let sin reign in your mortal body" (Romans 6:12). "***Therefore****,* glorify God in your body" (I Corinthians 6:20). "***Therefore*****,** whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

Every one of these great "***therefores***" flows from a view of reality. Because of X ,Y follows. If we want to live in the power of these great practical "***therefores***," we must take u[into our lives all that goes before it.

Today we continue our solemn celebrations of the opening of a New Year in our commemoration of the Baptism of the Lord. It is well worth going back to the Fathers of the first three centuries of the Church for some ancient spiritual reflections.

Baptism of Jesus: a moment of fulfilment

That Baptism is not a uniquely Christian practice, but one that was prevalent among the Jews of Jesus' day. It was not uncommon for the Jews of Jesus' day and the early Church to see in baptism a correlation with certain Old Testament events. Saint Peter, in his second epistle, explains that our baptism corresponds to the flood of Noah. Just as in those ancient days when all evil men perished under the waters of the great deluge, so in our baptism, the sinful man is destroyed (2 Pet 2:5).

Further, our baptism can be seen as a new crossing of the Red Sea. As Saint Paul explains, the Israelites underwent a baptism when Pharaoh and the Egyptians were buried under the waters of the sea and the people of God were saved and called to walk in the new life which God had bestowed upon them (1 Cor 10:2).

Also, we may see our baptism as a type of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River after forty years of wandering in the desert. Just as Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land through the waters of the Jordan, so each of us who is baptized is led by Jesus into the" promised land" that is the Kingdom Of God in which the Church represents the revitalised Israel.

The meaning of Jesus' baptism

These Old Testament prefiguring of Christian Baptism receives their fullest meaning, however, in the Baptism of the Lord. What happened when Jesus was baptized? The Fathers of the Church give three answers.

- ***Firstly,*** by entering into the water of the Jordan River, Jesus sanctified it and made the water of baptism a place for the working of the Holy Spirit.
- ***Secondly*****,** because baptism among the Jews was seen as a ritual act of death and burial of the old man, Jesus confronted the Ruler of Death in the baptismal waters of the Jordan, that he might defeat death and grant life upon all of creation. It was at the Baptism of Christ that Our Lord met his ancient enemy, the Devil, and achieved a decisive blow against him. By his baptism into death, the giver of life

destroyed the power of death: *death no longer has dominion over him* (Romans 6:9).

- ***Finally,*** in his baptism, Jesus met all those men and women who had been subject to death through the sin of Adam and Eve. In the words and deeds of the baptising minister, it is God who takes us by the hand and through blessed waters of the sacrament, the, each one of us was raised from the dead. Going down into the water is our dying to sin, and our coming up out of the water a sign of us sharing in the rising (coming up out of) of Christ Jesus from the tomb. Here is a beautiful image from the early Church Fathers: *through the resurrection of Christ, the tomb of the baptismal font becomes the womb of the Church, which gives new life to all who approach this Holy Sacrament*.

Saint Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, teaches us the following revelation:

Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him though likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection (**1 Cor. 6: 3-4**).

Therefore, as Saint Paul explains, baptism is a sacramental act whereby we are mystically joined to the death and resurrection of Christ. That is the powerful revelation that calls forth in our lives a spirit of repentance, an ongoing turning from the distractions of this world and a turning to the Way of the Kingdom.

From the time of the apostles, the Church has rejoiced in the saving works of God in His beloved Son. To put this in biblical terms: Jesus reversed the curse of the fall. In his baptism, He has opened for the faithful that garden of delight (Eden) that had been lost with that first sin. Intimacy with God, "walking hand in hand with God in the cool of the evening", was lost.

Today God proclaims we are free

This is why today is such a great Feast. We are reminded that in his baptism, Christ has restored Adam to all that he lost through disobedience.

Those divine actions of the Father, the Son and the Spirit at the River Jordan have significant consequences for all who enter that new intimacy with the Divine. The ancient One is defeated. Thus is the first taste of the Hope that will be complete in his resurrection.

The Father's words should echo loudly in our hearts, in good times and in times of sorrow and fear: Behold my beloved Son. He is the One in whom I am well pleased".

Our baptism/Jesus' baptism - consequences

Jesus did not initiate Christian baptism at the Jordan. That takes place over Easter, in his death and resurrection. Our baptisms come as an invitation to begin a lifelong pilgrimage of faith in hope. We make commitments, under God, to follow the Way of the Kingdom and turn our backs on the ways of the world.

A good place to begin would be to turn to the Bible to discover what is revealed to us there in terms of the Way of Jesus Christ. The most obvious one would be to take up, intentionally, all we find in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7). There is a full life of commitment in those teachings.

We could then go to St Paul and **Galatians 5**… *22 But the fruit that the Spirit produces in a person's life is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these kinds of things. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful self. They have given up their old selfish feelings and the evil things they wanted to do. 25 We get our new life from the Spirit, so we should follow the Spirit. 26 We must not feel proud and boast about ourselves. We must not cause trouble for each other or be jealous of each other.*

The baptism of Jesus was just the beginning of his journey, a journey that will end at Golgotha and his resurrection. Our baptisms were but the beginning of our own journeys, journeys that will take us to our own graves and beyond them to a share in the eternal life of the Risen and Reigning Christ.