

Pastoral Council
Thoughts For Reflection
January 10, 2016

Why would the Lord need Baptism?

The Gospel tells us that the Lord went to the Jordan River to be baptized and that he wished to consecrate himself in the river by signs from heaven...

Someone might ask, "Why would a holy man desire baptism?" Listen to the answer: Christ is baptized, not to be made holy by the water, but to make the water holy, and by his cleansing to purify the waters which he touched. For the consecration of Christ involves a more significant consecration of the water.

For when the Savior is washed, all water for our baptism is made clean, purified at its source for the dispensing of baptismal grace to the people of future ages. Christ is the first to be baptized, then, so that Christians will follow after him with confidence.

I understand the mystery as this. The column of fire went before the sons of Israel through the Red Sea so they could follow on their brave journey; the column went first through the waters to prepare a path for those who followed. As the apostle Paul said, what was accomplished then was the mystery of baptism. Clearly it was baptism in a certain sense when the cloud was covering the people and bringing them through the water.

But Christ the Lord does all these things: in the column of fire he went through the sea before the sons of Israel; so now, in the column of his body, he goes through baptism before the Christian people. At the time of the Exodus the column provided light for the people who followed; now it gives light to the hearts of believers. Then it made a firm pathway through the waters; now it strengthens the footsteps of faith in the bath of baptism.

(St. Maximus of Turin, bishop, 5th Century AD)