

On the Baptism of Christ

by

St Gregory Nazianzus

Section 17: Since the feast is about baptism and it is necessary to suffer a little for the one who for us took our form and was baptized and crucified, come let us briefly reflect on the differences among baptisms, that we may come from there purified.

Moses was baptized, but in water ([Exodus 17:6](#)), and before this “in the cloud and in the sea” ([1 Corinthians 10:1-2](#)). But this was typological, as Paul also thinks ([1 Corinthians 10:3](#)): the sea was a type of the water, the cloud of the Spirit, the manna of the bread of life ([John 6:35](#)), the drink ([1 Corinthians 10:4](#)) of the divine drink ([John 6:36](#)).

John also baptized, yet no longer in a Jewish way, for he did so not only in water but also for repentance ([Mk 1:4](#), [Mt 3:2](#)), but not yet in a wholly spiritual way, for he did not add the words “in the Spirit.”

Jesus was also baptized, but in the Spirit ([Mt 3:11](#), [28:9](#); [Mk 1:8](#); [Lk 3:16](#)). This is perfection. And how could he not be God, if I may digress a little, by whom you also become god?

I know also a fourth baptism, that through martyrdom and blood, by which Christ himself also was baptized, and it is much more venerable than the others, insofar as it is not defiled by stains afterward.

And I know yet a fifth, that of tears; but it is more laborious, received by one who each night washes his bed and his couch with tears ([Psalm 6:6](#)), whose bruises also stink with wickedness, who goes in mourning and with a sad face ([Psalm 38:5-6](#)), who imitates the turnaround of Manassas ([2 Chronicles 33:12-16](#)) and the humiliation of the Ninevites that brought them mercy ([Jonah 3:1-10](#)), who utters the words of the tax collector in the temple and is justified instead of the arrogant Pharisee ([Lk 18:13-14](#)), who bends down like the Canaanite woman and seeks compassion and crumbs, the food of a dog that is very hungry ([Mt 15:22-27](#); [Mk 7:25-28](#)).

Section 20: But let us honor today the baptism of Christ and celebrate well, not feasting with the stomach but rejoicing spiritually. And how shall we feast? “Wash, become pure.” ([Isaiah 1:16](#)) If you are “red” with sin but less than blood-red, become “white as snow” ([Isaiah 1:18](#)); but if you are scarlet and complete “men of blood” ([Psalm 5:6](#), [139:19](#)), still, come to be “white as wool” ([Isaiah 1:18](#)). Be entirely purified and be pure, for nothings gives so much joy to God as the correction and salvation of the human being, for whose sake every discourse and every mystery exist, that you may become like “stars in the world”, ([Philippians 2:15](#)) a life-giving force for other human beings; that as perfect lights standing beside the great Light, you may be initiated into the illumination hereafter, illumined with greater purity and clarity by the Trinity, from whom you have now received in measure the one ray of the one divinity, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory to the ages of ages. Amen.

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