



## **Father Joseph's Outline for the Sunday Before Epiphany**

Mark 1:1-8 - Sunday 01/04/2009

**“After me comes He who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 1:7-8)**

The Evangelist Mark starts the narrative of his Gospel with his reference to John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus Christ.

- The early Church's criteria during the election of Judas Iscariot's replacement followed the same timeline.
- “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us, one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22).

### **The Evangelist Mark very clearly, from the very beginning of his Gospel, emphasizes the divine incarnation of the Word (or Logos) of God.**

- “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1)
- He makes reference to prophecies about the coming of God taken from both Isaiah the Prophet as well as Malachi the Prophet.
  - “As it is written in the Prophets, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way.’” (Mark 1:2)
- The prophecy of Malachi about the coming of the Lord describes clearly that the one who is coming is none other than the Lord Himself.
  - “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1)
- The prophecy of Isaiah also characterizes the one who is coming as the Lord Himself.
  - “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God...and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:3,5)
  - The “voice” refers to John the Baptist.

*Accredited Member Of:*

Association of Independent Schools of Florida, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation & National Council for Private School Accreditation

**The words of John the Baptist prove that he himself was not the awaited Messiah, but rather he came to witness to the coming of the Messiah.**

- “And [John] preached, saying, ‘After me comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’” (Mark 1:7-8)
  - Untying the straps of shoes or sandals was one a task for the servants or slaves. So John implies that the mightier One who is coming is much higher and more deserving than earthly masters or lords.
- “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented.” (Matthew 3:13-15)
- “The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, ‘I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’ (Luke 3:15-17)
  - The reference to the gathering of wheat and the burning of the chaff is symbolic of the judgment that is done *only* by God.
- The Evangelist John further stresses the role of John the Baptist as a preacher about Christ the “True Light”.
  - “He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” (John 1:7-9)

**Let’s remember the purpose of the coming of the Lord:** the coming of Lord has two purposes. One is to restore the purity of His people. The second is to judge them.

“So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear Me,’ says the Lord Almighty.” (Malachi 3:2-4)

God is condemning all of these evil and sinful acts listed here. Through the lips of the Prophet Malachi, though, the Lord also shows us the way out of His judgment, and that is by returning to Him and keeping His ways.

“I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from My decrees and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,’ says the Lord Almighty.” (Malachi 3:6-7)

*Accredited Member Of:*

Association of Independent Schools of Florida, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation & National Council for Private School Accreditation

**A few words to take home:** Live simply, expect little, keep your mind free from worry, fill your life with love, keep hate out of your heart and life, give much, sing often, pray always, do not be consumed with yourself, rather think of others, do to them as you wish be done to you.

**A Prayer for the New Year (by Fr. Stanley Harakas)**

My Lord, I have ended the past year, thanking you for everything positive I have done, but also asking for forgiveness for all the errors I have committed. I recognize that I wasted many of the hours and moments which You granted me, but also that in many ways I managed to fulfill Your Holy Will, with Your help. May I begin the New Year which You have given me with new zeal and resolve to work for Your goals for all that is good and in the service of others. Beginning today, I accept without reservation whatever Your Divine goodness will send into my life this New Year. I ask only that You give me grace, wisdom and strength to serve You better and more perfectly, because only in this way will I have a blessed New Year to Your glory. Amen.

***Accredited Member Of:***

Association of Independent Schools of Florida, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation & National Council for Private School Accreditation