

Scripture Study

The Baptism of the Lord – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7

(Ps 29:1-2, 3-4,9-10)

Acts 10:34-38

Mark 1:7-11

Overview of the Gospel:

- The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord marks the beginning of the liturgical season of Ordinary Time. We are now in the “B” cycle of readings, which means this year our Sunday gospel readings will be taken mostly from the Gospel of Mark.
- While all four of the Gospels record the event of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, Mark has the shortest account (compare Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:29-34). We heard the first part of Mark’s account (verses 1-8) on the 2nd Sunday of Advent. There the emphasis was on John the Baptist proclaiming and preparing the way of the Lord.
- The emphasis on Jesus’ baptism in Mark’s Gospel is twofold: (1) Even though Jesus is sinless and has no need to be subjected to baptism as a sign of repentance for sin, he does so anyway to identify with sinners as part of God’s plan to be their Savior, and (2) To identify Jesus as the unique Son of God who is specifically anointed and approved by the Father for his redemptive mission (see Isaiah 42:1 and Psalms 2:7).
- Thus the baptism of Jesus by John marks the beginning of our Lord’s public life. His divinity is revealed and he is anointed for his mission in visible and audible signs.
- (In 2002, in the document *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope John Paul II proposed the Baptism of the Lord as the First Luminous Mystery of the Most Holy Rosary.)

Questions:

- According to St. Peter in our 2nd Reading, when did Jesus’ public ministry begin in earnest? In what way was his power manifested from then on?
- How would you apply the words of the prophet Isaiah in the 1st reading to the anointing and mission which Jesus received at his baptism? How would you apply it to the anointing and mission that *you* received at your own baptism and confirmation?
- Why, in the Gospel Reading, did Jesus (who was without sin) come to John to be baptized? What “righteousness” did he fulfill (see Matthew 3:13-15; Isaiah 53:10-12)? What do you think verse 11 meant to Jesus? How does this set the stage for his ministry to begin?
- Why did God choose this time to announce the presence of his Son (Luke 3:16-18; Acts 10:36)? Why was it necessary to be audible (John 11:41-42)?
- How has God affirmed you as his son or daughter in Christ?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 151, 422, 444, 535-537, 1223-1225, 1286-1287

Closing prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings this week!

If you have sincere piety, the Holy Spirit will descend on you also and you will hear the voice of the Father saying to you from above: “This was not my son, but now after baptism he has been made my son.” --St. Cyril of Jerusalem

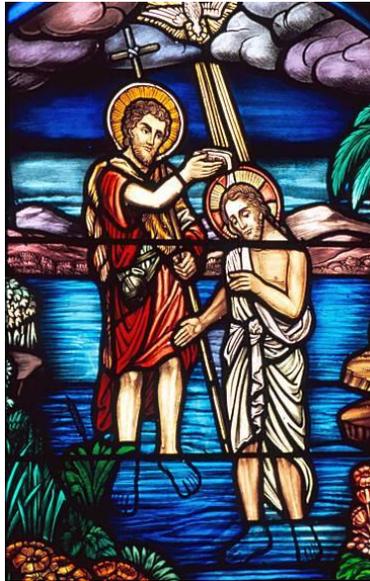
"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"

Scripture: *Mark 1:7-11*

7 And he [John the Baptist] preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." 9. In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; 11 and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Meditation: Why did Jesus, the Sinless One, submit himself to John's baptism? John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). In this humble submission we see a foreshadowing of the "baptism" of his bloody death upon the cross. Jesus' baptism is the acceptance and the beginning of his mission as God's suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). He allowed himself to be numbered among sinners. Jesus submitted himself entirely to his Father's will. Out of love he consented to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. Do you know the joy of trust and submission to God?

The Father proclaimed his entire delight in his Son and spoke audibly for all to hear. The Holy Spirit, too, was present as he anointed Jesus for his ministry which began that day as he rose from the waters of the Jordan river. Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all who come to believe in him. At his baptism the heavens were opened and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus



and the Holy Spirit, signifying the beginning of a new creation.

How can we enter into the mystery of Jesus' humble self-abasement and baptism? Gregory of Nazianzus, a seventh century Church father tells us: "*Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him.*"

Do you want to see your life transformed by the love and power of Jesus Christ? And do you want to become a more effective instrument of the Gospel of peace, mercy, and righteousness? Examine Jesus' humility and ask the Holy Spirit to forge this same attitude in your heart. As you do, heaven will open for you as well. The Lord Jesus is ever ready to renew us in his Holy Spirit and to anoint us for mission. We are called to be "light" and "salt" to those around us. The Lord wants his love and truth to shine through us that others may see the goodness and truth of God's message of salvation. Ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with his Holy

Spirit that you may radiate the joy of the Gospel to those around you.

"Do you see, beloved, how many and how great blessings we would have lost if the Lord had yielded to the exhortation of John and declined baptism? For the heavens had been shut before this. The region above was inaccessible. We might descend to the lower parts, but not ascend to the upper. So it happened not only that the Lord was being baptized - he also was making new the old creation. He was bringing the alienated under the scepter of adoption (Romans 8:15). For straightway 'the heavens were opened to him.' A reconciliation took place between the visible and the invisible. The celestial orders were filled with joy, the diseases of earth were healed, secret things made known, those at enmity restored to amity. For you have heard the word of the Evangelist, saying, 'The heavens were opened to him,' on account of three wonders [appearance of the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together at the baptism]. At the baptism of Christ the Bridegroom, it was fitting that the heavenly chamber should open its glorious gates. So when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and the Father's voice spread everywhere, it was fitting that 'the gates of heaven should be lifted up.'" (Hippolytus, 170-236 A.D; excerpt from *THE DISCOURSE ON THE HOLY THEOPHANY* 6)

"Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit and inflame my heart with the joy of the Gospel. May I find joy in seeking to please you just as you found joy in seeking to please your Father."

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