

Scripture Study

The Baptism of the Lord – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7

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

Acts 10:34-38

Matthew 3:13-17

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 “A” cycle of readings, which means this year our Sunday gospel will be taken mostly from the Gospel of Matthew.
- In Matthew’s gospel, this is the first time we see Jesus since we are told he returned from Egypt as a child after fleeing from the murderous King Herod (Matthew 2:19-23). These 30 some years are often referred to as Jesus’ hidden or “silent” life. Traditionally, rabbis did not engage in teaching until they were 30 years old.
- When John protests Jesus’ coming to him to be baptized, Jesus explains to him it is fitting to allow it “to fulfill all righteousness.” Righteousness in this context means the plan worked out by God for man’s salvation (Matthew 5:6; 6:33).
- 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 did Jesus, who was without sin, come to John to be baptized? What “righteousness” did he fulfill (see Isaiah 53:12)? What do you think verse 17 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)?
- What kind of righteousness does God have in mind for you? What does he want the outcome of your life to be?
- How has God affirmed you as his child in Christ?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 444, 535-537, 1223-1225, 1286-1297

Closing Prayer

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

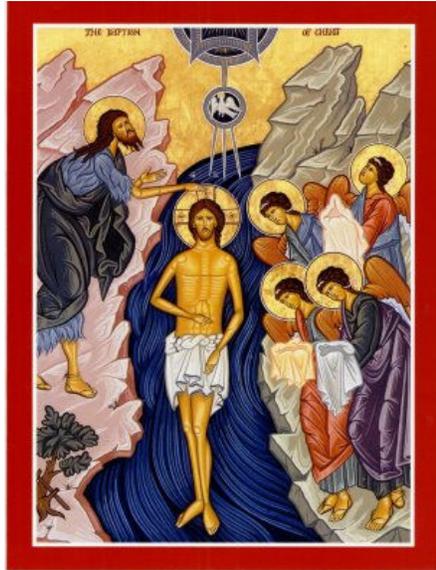
If you have sincere piety, the Holy Spirit will descend on you also and you will hear the voice of the Father saying to you from above: “This was not my son, but now after baptism he has been made my son.” --St. Cyril of Jerusalem

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"

Scripture: *Matthew 3:13-17*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Meditation: John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Why did Jesus, the Sinless One, submit himself to John's baptism? 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. 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 changes in your life? And do you want to become a more effective instrument of the gospel? 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 is ever ready to renew us in his 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 to fill you with his Holy Spirit that you may radiate the joy of the gospel to those around you.

"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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