

The Baptism of the Lord

Year B

10th January 2021



Today marks the end of the Christmas season. On Wednesday on the Feast of the Epiphany we reflected on the divine revelation of God in his son Jesus. This weekend we celebrate another divine revelation of God in the Baptism of Jesus. It is in baptism the Lord calls all of us his beloved sons and daughters.

Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God, who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him, solemnly declared him your beloved Son, grant that your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, may always be well pleasing to you.

Isaiah 55:1-11

Thus says the Lord: Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy corn without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk. Why spend money on what is not bread, your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live. With you I will make an everlasting covenant out of the favours promised to David. See, I have made of you a witness to the peoples, a leader and a master of the nations. See, you will summon a nation you never knew, those unknown will come hurrying to you, for the sake of the Lord your God, of the Holy One of Israel who will glorify you. Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked man abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him, to our God who is rich in forgiving; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks. Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts. Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

Most of us are baptized as children, but it is often as adults that we say our own ‘yes’ to the Lord who said ‘yes’ to us on the day of our baptism. It is often in those mature years that we can hear the call of Isaiah in today’s first reading, ‘O come to the water all you who are thirsty, Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near.’ The Lord keeps calling out to us from the moment of our baptism, and as the Lord declares in that first reading, ‘the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it

was sent to do.' Our response to the Lord's call, the Lord's Word, can be slow in coming, but his call, his Word, remains powerfully creative in each one of us to make us just as God created us to be.

Psalm: Isaiah 12

*Truly, God is my salvation, I trust, I shall not fear.
For the Lord is my strength, my song, he became my saviour.
With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name!
Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples!
Declare the greatness of his name.
Sing a psalm to the Lord for he has done glorious deeds;
make them known to all the earth! People of Zion, sing and shout for joy,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.*

1 John 5: 1-9

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God: Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth – so that there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and all three of them agree. We accept the testimony of human witnesses, but God's testimony is much greater, and this is God's testimony, given as evidence for his Son.

Chapter 5 of John's first letter begins with an important idea. Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ is "born of God", we are children of God. Those who truly love God also love their spiritual brothers and sis-

ters. We show this love for others through obeying God's commands. He adds that those born of God are "overcomers." John highlights the power of believers to conquer the sins and temptations of this world, through a relationship with God.

Even as early as John wrote this letter, Christians were facing discouragement from false teachers over their salvation so John is keen in the face of these falsehoods to reiterate and remind believers of the evidence, the Father's testimony in the Baptism (water) and crucifixion (blood) of his Son, Jesus Christ, as witnessed by the Holy Spirit.

*Alleluia, Alleluia! John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said:
This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Alleluia!*

Mark 1:7-11

In the course of his preaching John the Baptist said:
'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

The baptism of Jesus is a moment of special grace in our story of salvation. Not only did he join us in our sinful state, but the Father and the Spirit are seen and heard to be there with him. The gospel uses the simple phrase that "the heavens were opened," but it is a powerful statement. Later on, when Jesus completed his life-journey on Calvary, we read how "the veil of the Temple was rent in two." Now at last we were free to enter the Holy of Holies.

In our Baptism each of us is asked to go on a journey, however, it may not be a road upon which we wish to travel. Just like the fear of slipping up and hurting ourselves on icy pavements or roads can often keep us locked up indoors, the fear of rejection, of being made to feel foolish from telling

others the ‘good news’ (and I’m sure we all know people, family members especially who have stopped coming to Mass,) can keep us locked up spiritually, with the ‘good news’ only to ourselves. So, let us pray that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the fire of our baptism will be re-ignited again and again, enabling us to reach out to others with the compassion of Jesus and with the love of the Father. God has a plan for each one of us; Jesus is sending us out among wolves, but, as St Teresa of Avila prayed, ‘Christ has no body now on earth but ours.’



Prayer over the Offerings

Accept, O Lord, the offerings we have brought to honour the revealing of your beloved Son, so that the oblation of your faithful may be transformed into the sacrifice of him who willed in his compassion to wash away the sins of the world.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

In the absence of sacramental Communion, pray often:
‘My Jesus, I believe that you are present in this Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever.’ Amen

(based on prayer of St Alphonsus Liguori)

Prayer after Communion

Nourished with these sacred gifts, we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord, that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten Son, we may be your children in name and in truth.