

The Baptism of the Lord - Year B
9 & 10 January 2021

Entrance Antiphon:

After the Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

First Reading: Is 55:1-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Come to the water; listen to my words and you shall have life.

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm: Is 12:2-6. R. v.6

R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

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. **R.**

Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name! Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples! Declare the greatness of his name. **R.**

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. **R.**

Second Reading: 1 Jn 5:1-9

A reading from the first letter of St John

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child that 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia!

The heavens were opened and the Father's voice was heard: this is my beloved Son, hear him.

Alleluia!

Gospel: Mark 1:7-11

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark

You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

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.'

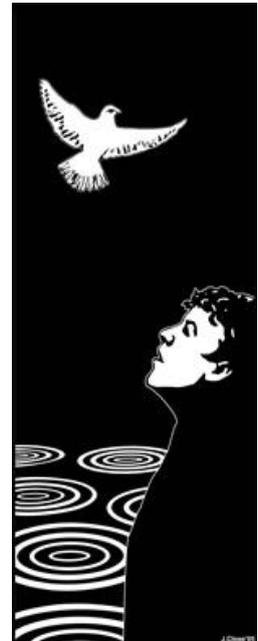
It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Communion Antiphon:

Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.



Readings 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - 17th January 2021

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3-10.19

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:13-15. 17-20

Gospel: John 1:35-42

The Baptism of the Lord - Year B

Sunday 10th January 2021

With the feast of the Baptism today we make a swift transition from Jesus' infancy and childhood to the event which, in all four gospels, inaugurates his adult public ministry.

The First Reading, from the first Servant Song in Isaiah (42:1-4, 6-7), is presumably chosen because its opening words seem to find an echo in the divine voice that Jesus hears as he emerges from the water following his baptism by John, 'You are my Son, the Beloved, in whom my soul delights'.

The Song records the divine address to a chosen person, presumably a royal figure. Endowed with God's Spirit, the Servant will 'establish true justice' through a gentle, yet persevering encouragement of those who are crushed and downtrodden. Beyond being 'a covenant to the people' (Israel), he is to be 'a light to the nations', leading them out of the darkness in which they are imprisoned into the light of God's day.

This note of a wider mission is picked up in the extract from Peter's address in the house of Cornelius, appearing as the Second Reading (Acts 10:34-38). Through an earlier vision at Jaffa (Acts 10:9-16) Peter has learned that God does not distinguish between a 'holy nation' (Israel) and an 'unclean' rest (the Gentiles). Peter has accordingly set aside his former hesitation and gone willingly to the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius. What we hear in the reading is the summary of the Gospel that he gives to the assembled household. Like the four Gospels, the summary here in Acts relates the beginning of Jesus' ministry to that of John. Peter alludes to the events surrounding Jesus' baptism by John in speaking of God's 'anointing him with the Holy Spirit and with power'. It is rather odd that the extract stops where it does because the text of Acts goes on to tell of how 'the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word', convincing Peter and those with him that baptism was not to be denied to these Gentiles who had heard the Gospel and received the Spirit (Acts 10:44-47). In this way the wider narrative links the baptism of Jesus and his reception of the Spirit with the baptism of all those who subsequently hear the Gospel with faith and likewise receive the Spirit.

The Gospel, Mark 3:13-17, completes the picture. The heart of John's preaching is to point to Jesus as the coming One who is 'more powerful' than he is. Jesus will be more powerful because, whereas John baptises in a literal sense – that is, with water – Jesus will 'baptise' with the power and force of God's Spirit. John's water baptism prepares a 'way' for the Gospel in repentant human hearts. Endowed with the Spirit following his baptism, Jesus will break the grip of Satan upon human lives and reclaim them for the Rule ('Kingdom') of God.

Mark's introduction of Jesus is in its own way very striking. Jesus does not drop down out of heaven like a god but simply emerges out of the common mass of repentant Israelites approaching John for baptism. It is only what happens afterwards that sets him apart. Mark's description is powerful: 'he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove'. The 'tearing apart' of the heavens responds to a cry for rescue expressed in another part of Isaiah (64:1: 'O, that you would tear open the heavens and come down'). The same expression will recur in the tearing of the curtain of the Temple immediately following Jesus' death upon the cross (Mark 15:38). In both cases there is the sense of the barrier between the divine and human world being ripped away.

The descent of the Spirit 'like a dove' has been variously explained. In view of the address that follows: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased', there are grounds for thinking that we should hear an echo of the God's love for Israel expressed in the bridal imagery of the Canticle of Canticles (2:14; 5:2; 6:9). Jesus' experience of the Spirit is essentially an experience and assurance of the Father's love. His Spirit-empowered mission will be to rebuild a People of God upon that same assurance. United with Jesus, every baptised person can hear the 'Father's voice' from heaven: 'You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter; in you I am well pleased'.

In this way, today's feast, while primarily about the baptism of Jesus, is also about our baptism as well. That sacrament brings human beings into the divine community of love that is the Trinity. It empowers us, as it empowered him, to reflect that love to the world.