

**SUNDAY GOSPEL***Baptism of the Lord**John 1:29-34*

The next day, seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me.

I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water.'

John also declared, 'I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him.

I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit".

Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God.' ■

**GOSPEL REFLECTION***Fr Paul Maunder OCD*

*This divine Light constantly beckons and draws us into union with itself ...*

It is implausible that John did not know Jesus after the memorable event of Mary's visit to Elizabeth when they were babes in the wombs of their mothers. Many a family story would have been told about that joyful event. So, what did John mean when he said, 'I did not know him myself'? John explains that it came to him by a special revelation. 'He who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit'. And John declares the pre-existence of this 'Lamb of God'.

Such is the momentous truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God who came to take our sins away. The eternal Word, the Son of God, became "flesh and dwelt among us". Like John, we too receive this truth by a special revelation, the light of faith. This divine Light constantly beckons and draws us into union with itself, especially in the mystery of interior prayer. ■

## FROM POPE FRANCIS

Today is the feast of the Baptism of Jesus. The Baptist is aware of the great distance between him and Jesus. However, Jesus came precisely to bridge the gap between man and God: if Jesus, who is all on the side of God, is also all on the side of man, then he reunites what was divided.

[The mission given Jesus by the Father through the Holy Spirit is] a mission characterized by a style, the style of the meek and humble servant, armed only with the power of truth. Here is the example of Jesus, and even the missionary style of Christ's disciples, to proclaim

the Gospel with gentleness and firmness, without shouting, without scold someone, but with gentleness and firmness, without arrogance or imposition.

The real mission is never proselytism but attraction to Christ. But how? How does this attraction to Christ come about? Through our own witness, from the strong union with Him in prayer, adoration and concrete charity, which is service to Jesus present in the least of our brothers and sisters. In imitation of Jesus, good and merciful Shepherd, and animated by his grace, we are called to make our life a joyful

witness that illuminates the path that brings hope and love.

This feast makes us rediscover the gift and the beauty of being a nation of baptized sinners - we all are - sinners saved by the grace of Christ. We are truly taken, through the Holy Spirit, into the filial relationship of Jesus with the Father. We are welcomed into the bosom of the mother church, enabled into a fraternity that knows no boundaries and barriers. ■

*Pope Francis' Angelus Reflection  
for 8 January (Matthew 3:13-17)*

## TALKING POINTS

1. John sees Jesus in a new light, as if for the first time! What have been some moments in your life when you have seen someone or something in a new way? Describe how this may have happened in your relationship with Jesus.
2. Both John and Jesus had a strong sense of God speaking to them and sending them on mission. How do you experience God's voice in your own life giving guidance and direction?

## PRAYER POINTS

**Pray for each other:** Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

**Response:** *Send us your Spirit O Lord!*

**Reflect:** Spend some time reflecting on how God has gifted you with the Holy Spirit. Ask him to reveal the ways he is sending you to be his presence in the world.

**Closing Prayer:** Loving Father, through baptism we have become your adopted sons and daughters. Through your Holy Spirit, guide, inspire and strengthen us as we live out this calling in our lives each day. Amen.

