

GOSPEL

Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him. 'It is I who need baptism from you,' he said 'and yet you come to me!' But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands.' At this, John gave in to him.

As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. A voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'

REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI

9 January, 2011

Today the Church is celebrating the Baptism of the Lord, the Feast which concludes the liturgical Season of Christmas. This mystery of the life of Christ visibly demonstrates that his coming in the flesh is a sublime act of love by the Three Divine Persons. We can say that from this solemn event the creative, redemptive and sanctifying action of the Most Holy Trinity will be increasingly evident in the public ministry of Jesus, in his teaching, his miracles, and in his Passion, death and Resurrection. We read, in fact, in the Gospel according to St Matthew that "when Jesus was baptised, he went up immediately from the water, and behold the heavens were opened [for him] 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" (Mt 3: 16-17).

The Holy Spirit "dwells" in the Son and testifies to his divinity, while the voice of the Father, coming from the heavens, expresses the communion of love. "The conclusion of the baptismal scene tells us that Jesus has received this true 'anointing', that he is the awaited Anointed One [the Christ]" (Jesus of Nazareth, New York 2007, pp. 25-26), which confirms Isaiah's prophecy: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights" (Is 42:1). He is truly the Messiah, the Son of the Most High who, emerging from the waters of the Jordan, establishes the regeneration in the Spirit and opens, to those who desire it, the possibility of becoming sons of God.

Not by chance, in fact, does every baptised person acquire the character of son, based on the Christian name, an unmistakable sign that the Holy Spirit gives birth to man "anew" from the womb of the Church. Bl. Antonio Rosmini affirms that "the baptised undergoes a secret but very powerful operation, through which he is raised to the supernatural order, is placed in communication with God" (The Ruling Principle of Method Applied to Education, Turin 1857, n. 331). All this was fulfilled again at the celebration of the Eucharist this morning in the Sistine Chapel where I conferred the sacrament of Baptism on 21 newborn babies.

Dear friends, Baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life which finds its fullness in the Church. At the favourable moment of the sacrament, while the ecclesial community is praying and entrusting to God a new son or daughter, parents and godparents commit themselves to welcoming the newly baptised, sustaining them in Christian formation and education. This is a great responsibility which comes from a great gift! Therefore, I desire to encourage all the faithful to rediscover the beauty of being baptised and of belonging to the large family of God, and to give a joyful witness of their faith so that this faith may produce fruits of good and harmony.

Let us ask this through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, to whom we entrust the parents who are preparing for their children's Baptism, as well as the catechists. The entire community participates in the joy of rebirth in water and in the Holy Spirit!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does Jesus' baptism reveal about who we become through our own baptism?



Heart: When you hear the words, "You are my beloved," what stirs within you as you think about your relationship with God?



Hands: How might you live out your baptismal identity this week by bringing the light and love of Christ into one concrete situation in your life? How could we, as a parish community, help families and godparents nurture the faith of the newly baptised?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.