



Scripture Nugget: Overcoming adverse human opinion

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a Voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17).

Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize Him. John was astounded. How could he baptize the One Who is mightier than him and Who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, and not merely with water for repentance as in John's case? Nevertheless, Jesus managed to persuade him. Why did Jesus do it? Was it solely for identification with the sinners? Far above sentimentality, a greater reason behind the action of Jesus is to purify the Church, His Body. Jesus has fully embraced His mission, and this act of purification serves as a precursor of the redeeming act of His death and resurrection. It is also fitting that by asking John to baptize Him, Jesus is putting the divine seal of approval on the ministry of John the Baptist who had announced the mission of Christ to the public.

Jesus eschewed public opinion of the onlookers who would come to the logical conclusion that since He needed Baptism, He was a sinner like them. Who saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Jesus? Who heard a Voice saying, "This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased."? It is a good guess that apart from Jesus and John the Baptist, not many among the onlookers except the one or two who were pure of heart would be able to witness this rare divine manifestation in which all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are manifested. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God (Matthew 5:8).* Nevertheless, Jesus was not deterred. He overcame adverse human opinion for the welfare of His Church, for our welfare.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You ignored adverse human opinion to do what is right and necessary. For our sakes, You submitted humbly to Baptism by St John the Baptist even though You are the Author of All Graces, and purer than a newly baptized baby. By Your example, strengthen me to overcome unholy fear, unjust rejection, adverse human opinion or anything that may hinder me from doing the right and just thing. Anoint me with Your Holy Spirit and help me remember that I have not been given a spirit of timidity but one of love, power and self-control (cf. 2 Timothy 1:7). Those who are weak in character allow themselves to be swayed by erroneous public opinion like Pontius Pilate in condemning You to death, and King Herod the tetrarch in beheading John the Baptist. Let the power of Your Spirit strengthen me to walk fearlessly on the path of truth even in the face of adverse human opinion. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.