

Scripture Reflection

A Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 3:13-17*) *The Baptism of Jesus*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a Voice from heaven said, "This is My Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – At that moment Heaven was opened

The testimony of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist was understandably astounded when Jesus came to him to be baptized. Baptism is for sinners who are in need of repentance and forgiveness from God. To the onlookers who did not know the true identity of Jesus, it would seem that Jesus was yet another sinful sinner in need of repentance. The testimony of God the Father that Jesus is His Son put an end to this false speculation. The testimony of the Holy Spirit was in the form of a dove alighting on the shoulders of Jesus.

Divine seal of approval on the ministry of John the Baptist and the continued call to repentance. John the Baptist was the most prominent forerunner and announcer of the coming of Jesus. John is the one Isaiah prophesied: *A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40:3).* By baptizing Jesus, John was declaring to all that Jesus is the One whom all of them had been awaiting for – the Son of God, the One who "would baptize with Holy Spirit and fire" (cf. Matthew 3:11). Thus, it was proper that Jesus came to John to be baptized, thereby putting a divine seal of approval on the ministry of John the Baptist. This was especially important later when John the Baptist died a tragic (but righteous in the eyes of God) death at the hands of King Herod. Thus, Jesus confirmed and continued the call of John the Baptist to sinners to repentance. Repentance put us on the road to salvation in Jesus Christ. To strengthen the message, Jesus submitted to being baptized by John even though He, the Sinless One is the Source of Divine Grace.

Manifestation of the glory of the Blessed Trinity. From Scripture we know that the manifestation of God in Three Persons is a very rare event. God deems it fitting that the Baptism of Jesus would be an occasion in which the glory of the Blessed Trinity was revealed. Yet there was no thunder or lightning, no awesome display of power, might or majesty – just a voice from heaven and a gentle dove alighting on the shoulders of Jesus. Was there anyone else who witnessed this wonderful manifestation of the glory of God besides Jesus, John the Baptist and the apostle who recorded this event? What about the others? Were they pre-occupied with "more important" matters?

Jesus sets an example for His followers. In submitting Himself to Baptism, Jesus emphasizes a sacramental life of grace for His followers. He shows that the Holy Spirit would indwell in full measure in those in the state of sanctifying grace. After His Baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where He fasted and prayed for 40 days. After this period of intense prayer and personal sacrifice, Jesus returned to Galilee *in the power of the Holy Spirit* (cf. Luke 4:14) to begin His public ministry. Thus, Jesus sets an example to His followers, emphasizing a sacramental life of grace, intense prayer and personal sacrifice, all of which will produce a conducive environment for the indwelling of the fullness and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You deliver a powerful message to me with Your Baptism. You did not hesitate at being identified with poor sinners. Nothing stopped You where my salvation is concerned. You alone deserve all my love and loyalty. Help me grow in my sacramental life of grace by a daily, sincere repentance of all my sins, and more frequent and ardent reception of the Sacraments especially the Eucharist and Sacrament of Reconciliation. Help me live more consciously in Your holy Presence through more hours of Eucharistic Adoration, and meditation on and living Your Sacred Word. May I show greater love for You through more intense prayer and personal sacrifice so that I may help You save many precious souls. Bestow upon me the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that I may become Your instrument in the little world around me. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk