



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8th January 2023 - The Lord's Baptism

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 8th January 2023 - The Baptism of Jesus (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. And a voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

The account of the baptism of Jesus in Mark, the earliest gospel, is also the simplest. In Mark the Voice from heaven is addressed to Jesus himself, and there is no sign that others heard it; it is an experience of Jesus: 'You are my Son'. In Matthew the Voice is addressed to the bystanders: 'This is my Son'. This makes the private revelation into a public scene, a declaration that Jesus' work is about to begin. In the same way our baptism is a public scene, a declaration that we are committed to Christ in his Church – even if we don't remember it! Matthew also records the little dialogue of John's unwillingness to baptise Jesus. Why should Jesus enter into the community of repentance which John was forming? He was no sinner! However, it was a gesture that Jesus was entering fully into the condition of all humanity. He shared fully in human nature, the nature of a humanity which had fallen even though he himself was sinless. At the outset of his ministry Jesus must reveal the fullness of his humanity, for only so could he redeem the fallen human race. Jesus is not merely passive, for he himself joins with John in making the positive step: 'We must do all that righteousness demands'.

A quick review: what difference has baptism made to my life?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 8th January 2023



First Reading: *The Servant of the Lord*

Isaiah 42:1-4.6-7

Thus says the Lord: 'Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have endowed him with my spirit that he may bring true justice to the nations. He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets. He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame. Faithfully he brings true justice; he will neither waver, nor be crushed until true justice is established on earth, for the islands are awaiting his law. I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand and formed you; I have appointed you as covenant of the people and light of the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison, and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.'

Jesus knew the scripture; it was the only book he would have known. When he heard the Voice from heaven and he experienced the Spirit of God coming upon him, he must immediately have thought of this passage from Isaiah. He was, then, this mysterious Servant of the Lord about whom the scripture spoke. He was to bring Israel back to the Lord. He must have known that the Servant was to endure pain and to reach his fulfilment only through his bitter suffering and death for others. This realisation of his mission as Servant must have been with him throughout his ministry, a dark shadow and a challenge to service. At the same time it was a confirmation of the love of the Father who was 'well pleased' in him. This was to be the model for all Christian suffering. We all know someone – we may even have experienced it ourselves – who has to suffer lovingly and generously in caring for others. The awesome privilege of suffering after the model of the Servant who is Jesus must draw respect and bring comfort to those who serve in this way. It is a proof of God's love for them.

How can I tell what God wants from me?

Second Reading: *Peter Prepares Cornelius*

Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household: 'The truth I have now come to realise,' he said, 'is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him. It is true, God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ - but Jesus Christ is Lord of all men. You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil.'

St Peter was making this speech at the house of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. Peter himself was still reeling from the shock of being told that foods (like pork) which he had, as a faithful Jew, all his life, considered unclean were perfectly acceptable. Now he is about to welcome into the Church a non-Jew, a gentile! Before he could even finish his speech, the Holy Spirit came down on Cornelius and his household, just as the Spirit had come down on the disciples at Pentecost. All this is the consequence of the coming of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism. That was when Jesus began his mission, which is so strikingly described here as 'the good news of peace'. Religion, even Christianity, has so often been the cause of strife and quarrelling, rivalry between different Christian churches, rivalry between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. We easily forget that the Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of peace, openness, welcome. The Spirit of Jesus does not build barriers but dissolves them, does not inflict wounds but heals them, does not push people away but embraces them. Is this the community of Christ which I am trying to build with those around me?

Do I put up any barriers; do I exclude anyone from Christ's love?

“ The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of peace, openness, welcome. ”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
w: www.wednesdayword.org e: info@wednesdayword.org