



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 10th January 2021 - The Baptism of the Lord

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 10th January 2021 (Mark 1:7-11): The Baptism of Jesus

In the course of his preaching, John the Baptist said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit." It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."

3 Reflect

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

What can Jesus have experienced at his baptism? It is described as 'the heavens torn apart', a voice, and the Spirit coming down like a dove. It must have given him the experience of being treasured, being embraced by the Person whom he called 'Father'. But he is given a task too, for the Spirit of God is an empowering Spirit. It must have felt like a new impetus, a thrill of challenge, a surge of energy and opportunity, an exciting new task. In this new Spirit he went out to bring the good news of peace, gradually gathering his community and spreading God's healing love by his personality, his teaching and his healing. This is the power which baptism has given to us also, to bring God's healing and God's love, to build a community of love which reflects and extends God's own love. Jesus must have been daunted by the task. He knew it would test him to the limit of his endurance, but he knew he had received the Power of God, and put his trust in his Father. He never promised us at baptism that it would be easy to live as Christians, but he did promise us that he would give us the surge of strength and power which is the Holy Spirit.

How has your baptism empowered you?

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 10th January 2021



First Reading: *Preparing the Way*

Isaiah 55:1-11

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy corn without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk. Why spend money on what is not bread, your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live. With you I will make an everlasting covenant out of the favours promised to David. See, I have made of you a witness to the peoples, a leader and a master of the nations. See, you will summon a nation you never knew, those unknown will come hurrying to you, for the sake of the Lord your God, of the Holy One of Israel who will glorify you. Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked man abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him, to our God who is rich in forgiving; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks. Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts. Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

The reading from Isaiah is positively bursting with ideas which prepare us for today's festival. To begin with, Isaiah proclaims the invitation to the rich messianic banquet. Perhaps we have had enough of rich food for the moment! But the picture of the Israelite relaxedly quaffing wine under his fig tree was an important part of the expectation of the kingdom of God. Perhaps the social aspects of the banquet are more important in Jesus' frequent teaching about the banquet, and especially the warmth of the host and the company of the saints. But at Cana he does change the water into huge quantities of wine! Secondly, there is the aspect of witness. The son of David is a witness, calling to God the nations that do not know him. By our baptism we too are constituted witnesses for the world, accomplices of the word of God. But witnesses to what? The last part of the reading centres on the forgiveness of God, for God is nothing if not a forgiving God, and the covenant nothing if not a covenant of forgiveness. The baptism of John, which Jesus himself underwent, is an invitation to change our ways and return to God.

How can I prepare the way for the Lord?

Second Reading: *The Love of the Children of God*

1 John 5:1-9

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God: Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth – so that there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and all three of them agree. We accept the testimony of human witnesses, but God's testimony is much greater, and this is God's testimony, given as evidence for his Son.

This is our first reading from the attractive First Letter of John, mostly about love. It is usually read during the Easter season, but the Church reads it during today's Feast to emphasise the mutual love of Father and Son, so fully expressed in the Baptism – 'with you I am well pleased'. By our own baptism we share in this love. But, as with all love, there is a price to pay, not only in obedience to God's commandments. This love is a victory, a love which conquers the world. How it conquers the world is hinted by the mysterious reference that Jesus 'came by water and blood'. With John there are always multiple layers of meaning. Does he mean the water and blood which flowed from Jesus' side as he was pierced by the soldier's spear on the Cross? Or is it – and this understanding lies deep in the tradition of the Church – that the water symbolizes baptism and the blood symbolizes the Eucharist? The sacraments flow from the side of Christ as he breathes forth, or gives over, his Spirit to the new community gathered beneath his cross – his Mother and the Beloved Disciple, the representatives of the Church. It is by the water and the blood that we meet Christ in these two fundamental sacraments.

Is the crucifixion compatible with God's love for his Son?

“ This love is a victory, a love which conquers the world ”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
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