8th & 9th January 2022

The Baptism of the Lord

The Catholic Parish of Pittwater

Sacred Heart & Maria Regina. Neighbourhoods of Grace, entrusted to the care of the Salvatorians.

Jesus, *Help Me* By St Claude de la Colombière S.J. (1641-1682)

Jesus, Help Me! In every need let me come to You with humble trust, saying, Jesus, help me!

In all my doubts, perplexities and temptations, Jesus, help me!

> In hours of loneliness, weariness and trials, Jesus, help me!

In the failure of my plans and hopes; in disappointments, troubles and sorrows, Jesus, help me!

When my heart is cast down by failure, at seeing no good come from my efforts, Jesus, help me!

> When others fail me and Your grace alone can assist me, Jesus, help me!

When I throw myself on Your tender love as Brother and Saviour, Jesus, help me!

When I feel impatient and my cross irritates me, Jesus, help me!

When sickness and loneliness overcome me, Jesus, help me!

> Always, in weakness, falls and shortcomings of every kind, Jesus, help me and never forsake me.

> > Amen



Thoughts of Bl Francis Jordan

May he preserve in you purity of heart! Become temples of the Holy Spirit!





For true human fraternity We pray for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution; may their own rights and dignity be recognized, which originate from being brothers and sisters in the human family.



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Continue to practise good hygiene. Please use the hand sanitisers provided in both of our Churches.

It is our responsibility to protect others and ourselves and stop the spread of COVID-19 in Australia.

Liturgy for the Week

- 10/01 **Monday Ordinary Time One** 1 Sam 1:1-8: Ps 115:12-19: Mk 1:14-20:
- 11/01 **Tuesday Ordinary Time One** 1 Sam 1:9-20: 1 Sam 2:1, 4-8: Mk 1:21-28:
- 12/01 Wednesday Ordinary Time 1 1 Sam 3:1-10, 19-20: Ps 39:2, 5, 7-10: Mk 1:29-39:
- 13/01 **Thursday Ordinary Time One** 1 Sam 4:1-11: Ps 43:10-11, 14-15, 24-25: Mk 1:40-45:
- 14/01 **Friday Ordinary Time One** 1 Sam 8:4-7, 10-22: Ps 88:16-19: Mk 2:1-12:
- 15/01 **Saturday Ordinary Time One** 1 Sam 9:1-4, 17-19, 10:1: Ps 20:2-7: Mk 2:13-17:

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The Baptism of the Lord and our own Baptism Fr James Farfaglia is a contributing writer for Catholic Online.



We all celebrate our birthday with great joy. We have just celebrated the birthday of Jesus, certainly the greatest birthday of all. Now we are celebrating the feast of his baptism. But I wonder how many of us celebrate the anniversary of our baptisms? How many of us even know when we were baptised?

This Sunday, the liturgical season of Christmas comes to a conclusion with the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord. This is a time when we might ask ourselves why Jesus would allow himself to be baptised by John the Baptist and what practical applications might we make in our own lives.

There is a difference between the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism that Jesus gives to us. The word baptism means to submerge in water. Baptism was not unknown to the Jewish people. Within the Jewish tradition there was a rite of immersion for legal purification for those who had become defiled under the Mosaic Law. Baptism was also used for Gentile converts to Judaism. Moreover, the Jewish Qumran, a community in existence during the time of Jesus, had been practicing baptism as a rite of initiation and purification over a period of years.

From the beginning John's baptism focused on conversion. His exhortations and appeals for personal repentance prepared the people to receive those graces which Christian baptism gives to us. While John's baptism, a ritualistic expression of conversion, penance and repentance, did not confer sanctifying grace, Jesus' baptism, a sacrament necessary for salvation, does bestow upon the baptised sanctifying grace.

Jesus had no need of conversion and repentance. He is the sinless one. So, why did Jesus allow himself to be baptised? There are a number of reasons that we can consider.

First of all, Jesus needs to make himself known to the Jewish people. A number of years ago, I had an opportunity to work in a mission territory in a very poor part of Mexico. Telephones, fax machines and email were not always available. Without these means of communication, which we take for granted, it was common to interact with people in a more personal manner.

Jesus walked the earth at a time when modern communication and the news media simply did not exist. A spiritual movement within the Jewish people was being stirred up by John the Baptist. It was very appropriate for Jesus to begin his public ministry by making his first public appearance precisely where John was baptising. It is John the Baptist who announces to the crowds: "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1: 36) Two of John's disciples are so moved by Jesus' appearance that they decide to become his disciples. Thus, Jesus uses the act of baptism as a means to make himself known to the people.

Secondly, the Lord's baptism is a moment of decision and identification. For thirty years he has faithfully carried out his Father's will in the ordinary circumstances of his hidden life. Now the Father is calling him to begin his public ministry. By being baptised, Jesus, although he is sinless, identifies himself with the very people that he has come to save.

At Calvary, Jesus takes the sin of the world upon himself. In a similar way, as he immerses himself in the waters of the Jordan, the sinless one takes upon himself the sins of humanity. Through his baptism, Jesus announces to the world that his public ministry has begun. In his humanity, he freely chooses to complete this mission and makes a free decision: he will carry out the Father's will to its' ultimate consequence. Through his baptism, Jesus identifies himself with all of us; i.e., sinful humanity, so that we can come to him filled with total confidence and peace.

It would be a mistake to consider, as some spiritual writers do, that Jesus was confused about his identity and did not know that he was the Messiah until his baptism in the Jordan. On this matter the Catechism of the Catholic Church is very clear.

"The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against the heresies that falsified it" (# 464).

"This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, 'increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man', and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience. This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking 'the form of a slave'.

But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person. The human nature of God's Son, not by itself but by its union with the Word, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God. Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father. The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.

By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal" (#'s 472-474).

As we contemplate the mystery of Christ's baptism, there are a number of practical applications that we can consider.

In today's culture, many people, even those who are baptised Christians, have great difficulty with their own identity. Many people wonder what their purpose is in this life. People find little or no meaning as they carry out their daily activities. A cloud of laziness hangs over many people as they also strive to find direction for their lives. This Sunday's liturgy shows us that Jesus gives us meaning, purpose and direction. It is through the sacrament of baptism that we become his disciples. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and it is precisely in Jesus that our human existence finds fulfillment.

Moreover, the consideration of Jesus' baptism, gives us an opportunity to remember our own baptism. If you do not know the date of your own baptism, it is a good idea to go through your personal files and find out when it occurred. Many people are celebrating the anniversary of their baptism with a special celebration like a birthday. After all, baptism is the day that we are reborn. We become children of God, active members of the Church, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Original sin is washed away; we receive sanctifying grace and the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. The reality of baptism certainly gives us great cause to celebrate.

Finally, as we contemplate the baptism of the Lord, we are reminded of our apostolic mission as disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus commissions the Church to go forth and baptise all nations. It is erroneous to deny that baptism is essential for salvation. The large numbers of people who have not been baptised should inspire us to always seek the salvation of souls. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Jesus' baptism underscores the apostolic dimension of baptism, precisely because it is the Holy Spirit who appears as tongues of fire at the moment when the Church begins its mission to baptise all nations.



Sacrament Essentials: Baptism

Initiation Rituals

A common thread in human cultures, tribes and societies is ritualistic initiations that mark the various stages of life. They relate to all kinds of stages, such as; welcoming a new baby, introducing boys to manhood, marriage, grandparenthood and death. Catholicism has always supported the fundamental wisdom of the human need for ritual and initiation and it is woven into a rich tapestry of faith and culture.



Every culture has rich and unique practices and expectations in the details, but they all essentially point us towards this universal truth: our life here is a process of change.

Why do so many non-practicing or marginal Catholics seek to have their children baptised? Some cynics would say it is so they can get their children into a Catholic school or to appease grandma. However, that kind of dismissive assumption in many cases is not only wrong; it misses a precious moment of invitation.

The Miracle of Life

Catholics on the edges come knocking on our Church door with a new baby because we have a very special gift to offer them: recognition of the birth of a unique, precious human being whose very existence is a miracle. New parents are searching for a way to meaningfully welcome their child to the world and present them to the family and the wider community.

Whether or not the parents understand all the theology about Baptism, they intuitively know that a Baptism is not merely about ticking boxes on a school enrolment form. It's a part of their family heritage and culture. It is a precious gift that they can give to their child and a way of recognising the divine hand that was at work in the creation of this wondrous child.

What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is a sign of God's love. This sign is not like a traffic sign that announces the speed limit or parking rules which can be changed at will by lawmakers or ignored entirely by drivers. Nor is it simply like a smile that can be a sign of welcome. A Sacrament is more; it involves a profound relationship between the sign, the action of Grace, and the person who receives it. It is not only a sign of God's love, it also makes God's love real and concrete in our lives.

God's love is a vast mystery, complex and rich beyond full human comprehension. None-the-less, the Sacraments help us to understand this love, however imperfect and incomplete that understanding may be. Each Sacrament illuminates a dimension of God's love with particular clarity. Baptism shines the spot-light on the love of the Father for his sons and daughters.

In its essence, Baptism is a spiritual rebirth where your child enters into kinship with God. No longer is she simply a daughter in the human family, she is now a beloved daughter in God's family, a princess in the Kingdom of God; your son a prince.

The Waters of Birth...

There are many symbols used in a Baptism ceremony, but only one is the critical, sacramental gesture. Each Sacrament has both sacred words and a sacred gesture and both need to be present in order for the Sacrament to take place and to be considered valid.

In Baptism the sacred words are: I baptise you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The sacred gesture is the immersion in water. Why water? Water is a symbol of birth. When we are born naturally, the amniotic sac bursts and the water drains away as the child emerges from it. Similarly, the baptismal waters give us a tangible, sensory expression of a spiritual reality: we are reborn spiritually as children of God.

We can't actually see the child being spiritually reborn, but we know it happens because we hear the words and see the child emerging from the water.



In Baptism the symbol of water signifies your child's birth into the life of Christ. As the water flows and the words of Baptism are prayed, a deeper reality is taking place: your child is being embraced by God the Father as one of his own.

Baptism comes from a Greek word meaning "to plunge" or "immerse". By being immersed in water we enter into the 'tomb' with Jesus and rise again with him as a 'new creature.' (CCC #1214)

Signs and Symbols of Baptism

Baptism has many symbols that are used in the ceremony. Here's a run down of what they mean.

Sign of the Cross

The child is claimed for Christ by the priest, parents and godparents who make the Sign of the Cross on his forehead. The Sign of the Cross reminds us that while Christ saved us from evil by his death on the cross, our lives will also include suffering and temptation.

Anointing with Oil

Before Baptism, the child's breast is smeared with the 'Oil of Catechumens'. It is a sign of the Lord's strength given to the child to assist him on his journey in faith.



Water is the central symbol and reminds us of the waters of birth. It is also a sign of spiritual cleansing. Through Baptism, the mark of original sin (and all other sins committed to that point), are washed away. Some churches have facilities for the full emersion of the Baptism candidate in water. Others have a smaller font and use a jug or shell to pour water over the head of the child.

White Garment

Water

The early Christians would wear a white robe to demonstrate that they had 'put on Christ'. Similarly today, the newly baptised child is clothed in white symbolising their new life in Christ and is an outward sign of Christian dignity.



Anointing with Chrism

After Baptism, the crown of the head is anointed with a perfumed oil called 'chrism'. It is used to anoint kings and monarchs and it sets the child aside for a mission.

Candle

The baptismal candle is lit from the paschal (or Easter) candle and is a symbol of hope. It represents how Christ conquered evil and darkness. The candle is presented to the new



member (or his parents) as a sign of the Light of Christ by which the newly baptised now lives.



You are my own dear Son

The Baptism of the Lord



Draw a line to connect each symbol with it's correct meaning.

Candle



Symbolises life, cleansing and growth

Symbolises the Holy Spirit

Symbolises purity and freedom from sin

Symbolises the emergence from darkness into the light





The Living Word

Is 40:1-5. 9-11

Entrance Antiphon

After the Lord was baptised, the heavens were opened,

and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove,

and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

First Reading

A reading from the prophet Isaiah The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it.

'Console my people, console them' says your God. 'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her time of service is ended, that her sin is atoned for, that she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for all her crimes.' A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord. Make a straight highway for our God across the desert. Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley; then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion. Shout with a loud voice, joyful messenger to Jerusalem. Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God.' Here is the Lord coming with power, his arm subduing all things to him. The prize of his victory is with him, his trophies all go before him. He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 103:1-2. 3-4. 24-25. 27-30. R. v.1

(R.) Oh, bless the Lord, my soul!

Lord God, how great you are, clothed in majesty and glory, wrapped in light as in a robe! You stretch out the heavens like a tent. (**R**)

Above the rains you build your dwelling. You make the clouds your chariot, you walk on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers and flashing fire your servants (**R**)

How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your riches. There is the sea, vast and wide, with its moving swarms past counting, living things great and small. **(R)**

All of these look to you to give them their food in due season. You give it, they gather it up: you open your hand, they have their fill. (**R**)

You take back your spirit, they die, returning to the dust from which they came.

You send forth your spirit, they are created;

and you renew the face of the earth. (R)

Second Reading Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7 A reading from the letter of St Paul to Titus

He saved us throught the waters of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

When the kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind were revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life.

The word of the Lord

Gospel Acclamation

See Lk 3:16

Alleluia, alleluia! John said: He who is to come is mightier than I; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 3:15-16. 21-22 A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

When Jesus had been baptised and had been praying, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit came upon him.

A feeling of expectancy had grown

among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

The Gospel of the Lord

Communion Antiphon Jn 1:32,34 Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

REFLECTION

by Dianne Bergant CSS

The optional readings for this feast recapitulate the themes of the entire Advent-Christmas season. Within the Christian tradition the voice that announces the future events is associated with John the Baptist. However, the reading itself proclaims the coming and manifestation of the Lord, clearly an Advent theme. The gospel reading from Luke moves us from anticipation of the coming of the messiah to fulfillment of God's promise. This theme of fulfillment is at the heart of the Christmas message. In the baptism narrative we see that Jesus has come into our midst, not only as a helpless infant, but as our anointed messiah. There is a dimension to this same gospel reading that opens us to a future yet to be fully realized in our lives. The one upon whom the Spirit descends has come to baptize us in that same Spirit.

The reading from Titus is similar to the gospel. Both herald the appearance of Jesus and promise a future fulfilment for us. Renewed by the Spirit, we will be justified and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The readings clearly announce that: the Lord is coming; the Lord has come; the Lord will continue to come to and through us into the whole world. Under all of this rings the melody of God's creative power as seen in the Psalm response. In view of the Isaian passage, God promises to create something new in the wilderness of chaos. There the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

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