

Sunday, January 10, 2016

The Baptism of the Lord

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

2nd Reading: Acts 10:34-38

Responsorial: Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10

Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Knowing and Experiencing the Fruit of Jesus' Baptism

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 3:16)

When we think about the baptism of Jesus, three different baptisms come to mind: his baptism in the Jordan River, his baptism on the cross, and his desire to baptize us in his Holy Spirit.

First, when he was baptized by John, Jesus showed how deeply he wanted to be joined with all of us, sinners though we are. As St. Paul explained, Jesus became sin for us so that in him “we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through his baptism, he took on our sin and carried it with him until the day of his death on the cross.

Second, there is Jesus' baptism on the cross. He once told his disciples, “There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!” (Luke 12:50). When James and John wanted Jesus to guarantee them a special place in heaven, he replied: “Can you ... be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” (Mark 10:38). He knew that his cross was the culmination of everything that his baptism in water began. All the sin that he accepted was put to death, and we were redeemed!

But it doesn't end at the cross. Third, Scripture tells us that Jesus now wants to baptize all of us “with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 3:16). He wants to share the fruit of his baptism with us by immersing us in his Holy Spirit—just as he baptized the first apostles on Pentecost.

Today's feast is an invitation for us to ask, “Do I know the freedom from sin that Jesus' baptism won for me?” It's also an invitation to ask, “How well do I know the Holy Spirit?” Just as the Spirit came upon him when he was baptized, this same Spirit wants to come upon us and empower us to live a godly life.

“Thank you, Jesus, for being baptized for me. Now come and fill me with your Spirit!”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. The first reading from the book of Isaiah is a prophecy that describes in vivid detail the many aspects of Jesus' mission. How would you describe his mission? In what ways has Jesus fulfilled this mission? In what ways has he called you to continue this mission?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, we are exhorted to give to the Lord "glory and praise" and to "adore the Lord". How would you describe the ways you give the Lord glory and praise and adore him? What are some reasons from your own life that lead you to do this?
3. In the second reading, these opening words of Peter at Cornelius' home describe God's great desire to reach all people: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all." Why are Peter's words just as important today as they were when he first spoke them? What steps you can take to promote "peace through Jesus Christ," promote greater unity among Catholics and non-Catholics, and promote greater mutual understanding between Christians and non-Christians?
4. In the Gospel, John the Baptist speaks these words when asked if he was the Christ: "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." What do you think John meant when he said that Jesus will "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"? When you were baptized, you also received the Holy Spirit and were united to Jesus and drawn into his relationship with the Father. How have you experienced this truth in your life?
5. The last paragraph of the meditation poses two questions: "Do I know the freedom from sin that Jesus' baptism won for me?" and "How well do I know the Holy Spirit?" How would you answer these questions?
6. The meditation ends with these words: "Just as the Spirit came upon him when he was baptized, this same Spirit wants to come upon us and empower us to live a godly life." How would you describe the impact the Holy Spirit has had on your life?
7. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for being baptized for you and ask him for a fresh infilling of his Spirit. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmus.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]