

## **Baptism of the Lord - 2019**

Is 42:1-4, 6-7; Acts 10:34-38; Lk 3:15-16, 21-22

### **REFLECTION ON THE MASS:**

The Eucharistic prayer which began with the preface, moves into two big parts. First is the time where the bread and wine is transformed by Jesus' words into his body and blood. Although they continue to have the appearances of bread and wine - the taste, the smell, the feel - at a deeper level they have changed what they are, as was the case at the Last Supper. Before these words you will see the priest extend his hands over the offering and ask that the Holy Spirit make the offering Holy so that it may be transformed. Then the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper are reenacted in such a way that Jesus is speaking through the priest. The priest then procures them what we have before us: "the Mystery of Faith." The second part of the Eucharistic prayer then begins. Notice that the priest switches back to the third person as he prays in the name of the community. Join mentally in this prayer which the whole body of Christ, with Jesus now present as head of that body can offer the perfect praise to the Father. We are now fully the Body of Christ and participate in Jesus' offering of himself to the Father for the salvation of the world. Listen as the words "we offer you" are said, hear the prayers for the living, the dead, the unity of the Church and the world, and that as we participate in the offering of the sacrifice we may participate in its effects of salvation. This great prayer ends with the doxology "Through Him, With Him, and In Him" a final word of praise to the Father before we all respond AMEN!

### **HOMILY:**

The Gospel today begins with expectation. The people were filled with a sense of expectation, and they were looking for something. Like them we have needs. They were oppressed by an occupying military power, we have pressures that oppress us and people who oppress us. They were poor in the goods of the world, we are sometimes in want - and although not as poor as some people in our world are - we have many needs. They were looking for something to change their situation, to bring them fullness - so are we. Like them we try to gain the things of the world to make us feel satisfied, and we want more. Like them we try to rebel against the things and people that oppress us to overpower them, and we wind up in more stress than before. Like them we search for something to satisfy the incompleteness inside of us and want the world to be transformed for our comfort - and this doesn't happen.

They look to John thinking he may be the solution - that he may be the Christ - the anointed one foretold in scripture. John points away from himself to another, he points to Jesus as the one who can give them what they are looking for. Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. We celebrate this event where Jesus comes, not to be cleansed from his sin, but rather to cleanse the water so that it can be used for Baptism to cleanse us and transform us in a different

way. This whole event shows us who Jesus is, and the deeper meaning of the story points to how Jesus saves us and fulfills us.

I would like to focus our attention on two points in the story. First are the words of John the Baptist: *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.* John tells us how high above other's Jesus is and that Jesus will bring another Baptism. Not an external one like John's but one that penetrates deep by the Spirit. John's baptism was a symbol of cleansing of repentance, Jesus' Baptism will do something for real - not just be a symbol. It will transform the individual like fire transforms what it touches, or purifies something. Like fire, this Baptism contains the power of the Holy Spirit of God. It is up to us to fully realize that power of that fire that was lit at our Baptism and allow it to work in our lives. But this power is not about strength and being in control - it is something different.

This brings us to the second point: The words of the Father speaking: *You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.* These words not only declare Jesus as son of God, but the wording is also a reference to the suffering servant spoken of by the prophet Isaiah - we hear about him in the first reading: *he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench.* Jesus brings us out of our condition of injustice, oppression, poverty, and emptiness by transforming us and others - not by showing raw power, but by offering us a way that may be contrary to the world's way. However, it opens up the power of God in the situations of life. He's not going to be going around cracking heads for us (as we may want him to), or just answering every demand like a genie in a bottle - he will bring an internal transformation to those who let his Baptism continue to transform them through their lives. And in the end, he will bring them to a fulfillment by lifting them up in a place far above all the things that worry us in this life. God works power in ways that are different than we would think.

Jesus fulfills the role of the servant who suffers in his life yet is faithful in his worship and duty to God. As the prophecy about this servant in Isaiah goes on, not only are the servant's enemies eventually brought to shame and he is lifted up, but through his suffering brings justice in the world. Jesus is the suffering servant and calls all of us to through our baptismal connection to him to follow him in this same manner. In this connection we allow the power of God to lift us above the things that crush us in ways that are unexplainable - and from personal example I can tell you this is true - and we learn to accept a new growth in our lives brought by Jesus, a growth and transformation that allows us to realize the great promise of being eternally lifted up as Jesus was.