

New Life

This fresco by Perugino, Michelangelo's art teacher, is found on the wall of the Sistine Chapel. Like the other frescoes in this sacred space, this panel contains multiple scenes. The central scene is the baptism of Jesus. The viewer clearly sees Jesus standing in the water, with John the Baptist next to him, pouring water over his head.

God the Father is above, ready to declare that this is his beloved Son. The Holy Spirit comes down upon Jesus in the form of a dove. It was the Spirit who helped John know that this was the Messiah, the one sent by God to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

After his baptism, Jesus is sent out to preach and teach. The fresco reveals that Perugino has read his Bible: the scene to the right Jesus is shown preaching to the multitudes. John the Baptist's mission changes, too. He goes from preparing for the coming of the Messiah to following and testifying about him. This is what the baptized do: the new life we are given calls and strengthens us to offer that new life to others.

At our baptism, we were sanctified, forgiven our sins, incorporated into the body of Christ, and given



Piece: *Baptism of Christ*, circa 1482
 Artist: Pietro Vannucci (Perugino)
 Location: Sistine Chapel

a mission to share this baptism with others. In fact, the last words of Jesus before his ascension were, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection

How willing am I to share about Jesus and what he means to me? Do I have family or friends in doubt about baptizing their child? How can I kindly encourage them?

*"I saw the Spirit come down like a dove
 from the sky and remain upon him....
 Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God"
 (John 1:32, 34).*