

2021 January 10

The Baptism of the Lord.

Reading:

First: Isaiah 55.1-11, "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty." (11a)

The Psalm: Isaiah 12.2-6, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (3)

Second: 1 John 5.1-9, "This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ." (6a)

The Gospel: Mark 1.7-11, "I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy spirit." (8)

Baptism with Water, Fire and Blood!

John the Baptist testified about Jesus, the Messiah, as the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3.11) John the Evangelist in his letter testifies that there are three witnesses, "There are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the Blood, and these three agree." (1 John 5.78) The above words of Matthew and John refer to the baptism of Jesus and to our baptism. In Christ we received the baptism by water and the Holy Spirit. The transformation worked out in our baptism is a rebirth as God's sons and daughters. The Blood of Jesus shed on Calvary makes this transformation possible and effective.

The first visible act to make this miracle of humans being absorbed into God and made his children was the birth of the Son of God as a Son of man in Bethlehem. Divinity came down to earth to lift humanity to the level of divinity. The baptism of Jesus in Jordan by the Baptist was part of divinity's immersion into the sinful humanity, the divine stooping down to lift humanity up. Jesus received the baptism for the remission of sin, though he did not have any sin; in fact, sin could not even approach him. However, in order to become one with sinners he became "sin", that is, stooped down. The baptism of Jesus was this act of becoming sin.

The miracle and transformation that happen in every baptism started with Jesus and that was made visible and audible to all. As Jesus came out of the water the Spirit of God came upon him with the Father's voice from heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3.17) Jesus received the baptism of sinners in order to go before revealing the process of making us the daughters and sons of God. Though our physical ears do not hear, and our physical eyes do not see, the same miracle is repeated at every baptismal pond when a child or adult is baptized. The Spirit of God comes down and the voice of God is uttered, "This is my son, this is my daughter". This miracles is made possible through the blood of Christ, that is, through his life he offered for the sake of humanity on the Cross. This baptism in the blood of Christ makes each of us a Christian, a follower of Christ and co-heir with him in the kingdom.

Thus when we celebrate the baptism of Jesus we simultaneously commemorate our baptism. It is Christ's birth, baptism, life, death and resurrection that made the transformative miracle in us is made possible at our baptism. Hence in celebrating Jesus, it is celebrating us, we becoming aware of the great dignity to which Jesus enabled us to be elevated. It is this privilege and this dignity that we try to share to our fellow humans around us. The baptism we receive is inter-twined with a mission, which Jesus entrusted to every believer, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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." (Matthew 28.18-19) This is our mission, mission of every baptized Christian!

Fr. George

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

