

## **Baptism of the Lord January 10, 2021**

Today we hear the story of Jesus' baptism this time from the Gospel of Mark. John the Baptist proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Have you ever thought about what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? About nine years ago, while on retreat, I had a conversion of heart and was so deeply moved by the Holy Spirit, my life was radically changed, never to be the same again! In fact, it was this conversion, this encounter with the Holy Spirit that has brought me to where I am today.

Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism before he embarked on his public ministry. We know the fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5.22) These fruits of the Spirit were now part of Jesus public ministry.

To receive the fruits of the Holy Spirit at Baptism implies an "action." The action needs to come from us. John the Baptist preached "repent and be saved" which was the message of the Old Testament. Jesus preaches "repent and do good works" the message of the New Testament. The fruits of the Holy Spirit enable us to do good works and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

"As long as we are merely content to receive and use the gifts of the Spirit, the charisms, we will be like Christmas trees, with glittering gifts set out there at night by Dad and Mom. But every Christmas tree, after a while, withers and is thrown out, because it is not a living tree; it has finished serving after it has given the children joy. When we begin to practice the life in the Spirit (love, ongoing repentance, and mortification), then we will look like a real tree, rooted in the earth and bearing fruit in due time: *He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:3)* (Sober Intoxication of the Spirit, Part Two, Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. CAP. Pg. 15)

So, as Father Raniero points out, unless we put into action what the Holy Spirit has given us, we are not truly living out our baptismal call! "Do we want to be Christmas trees, perhaps not even real ones but plastic ones, or do we want to be living trees?" (page 16)

Just as the reception of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism prepared him for his public ministry, so too does our own baptism prepare us for our public ministry. What is our public ministry? Simply put, we are to love God, love others, make disciples! Say YES to the Holy Spirit! Allow the Holy Spirit to convert you! The sign of our conversion is action. The result of this action is joy! As my husband says "If Jesus is in your heart, please notify your face!" I think he borrowed that line from Pope Francis!

"It is not enough to say we are Christians. We must live the faith, not only with our words, but with our actions." (Pope Francis, on Twitter, Jan.20, 2014)

*Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister*