

The Baptism of Jesus

Grace: Ask for the grace to better know and understand Jesus so that your love for Jesus will grow and your desire to imitate him will increase.

Introduction:

Read and contemplate one the accounts of the Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-11, or Luke 3:1-22). Up until now, except for a few little stories it seems that Jesus has led a relatively quiet and private life. This could be said to be the beginning of Jesus' vocation or public ministry.

Ever since Jesus got lost in Jerusalem and was later found in the temple, he has spoken about the Kingdom of God. Perhaps Jesus has spoken with you privately about the various possibilities for how he could help others to understand how much God loves His people.

Jesus has a cousin, John the Baptist, who has been enthusiastically telling people of the need to change their ways. Jesus likes much of what John has been saying and even doing. You may want to imagine going with Jesus to visit John to find out more information. While visiting, Jesus seems to be getting clarity about his own mission and finally he asks John to baptize him. John somewhat reluctantly does.

You may want to look at the baptism from several perspectives. You can imagine yourself as a stranger watching the baptism. What stands out to you? What details do you notice? You may imagine yourself being baptized by John. What might John say that you need to do to repent? Discuss this with Jesus.

Perhaps you prefer to be closer to Jesus and you choose to be a friend of Jesus who accompanies him on the journey to visit John. What did you and Jesus talk about on the way to visit John? Do you have any concerns for Jesus? What is Jesus' mood like? What does Jesus say to you after being baptized? What do you say to Jesus? Do you have any questions about what Jesus' baptism means? If so, ask Jesus to explain.

Another perspective would be to imagine being John the Baptist. What were some of your reservations about baptizing Jesus? What was it about Jesus' answer that put your concerns aside? How does it feel to baptize Jesus and to feel God's loving power proclaim that Jesus is God's chosen one? How has baptizing Jesus changed your life?

What happens after the baptism? Where does Jesus go? Are you invited to go with Jesus? Do you decide to follow Jesus and go with Him?

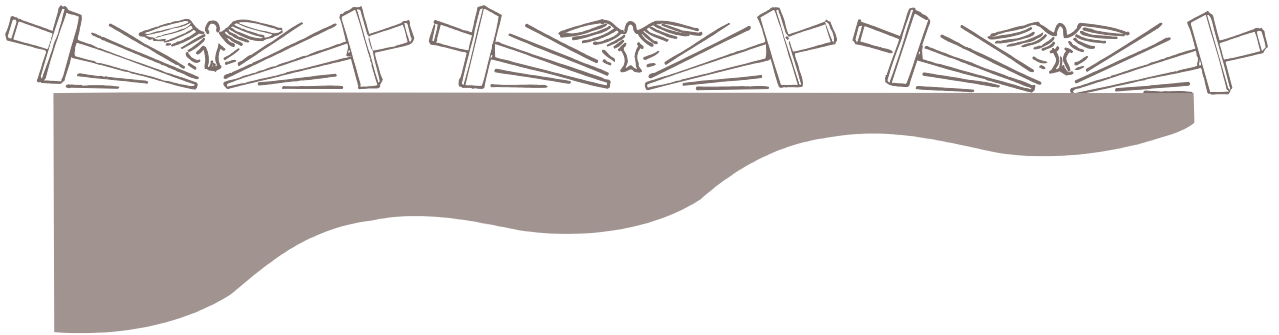


The "yes" of Jesus to the entire will of God also expresses solidarity with men, who have incurred guilt but yearn for righteousness.

-Joseph Ratzinger

Matthew 3--The Baptism of Jesus

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."



Matthew 3--John the Baptist Prepares the Way

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."



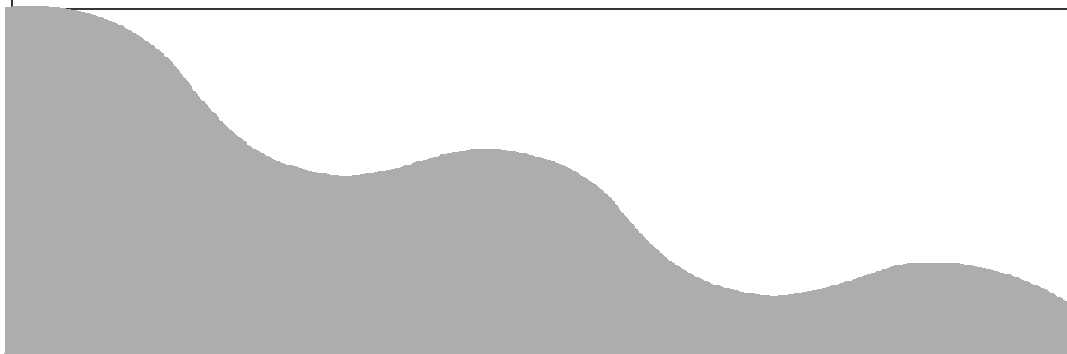
Mark 1: 1-11 - The Baptism of Jesus John the Baptist Prepares the Way

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—"a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Luke 3: 1-22 --The Baptism of Jesus

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.'" John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay." The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them. But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

In these or similar words ... I imagined my self as John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. I am a man who has a passion for Jesus. Ever since I was child I have loved my nephew more than my mother, father, and everyone else I have known. People tell me I'm crazy and that it's wrong to love a man, but Jesus is more than a man. I believe he is the Son of God and carries out God's will. This is why I was so awed by what happened yesterday. Jesus came all the way from Galilee to the Jordan where I was baptizing people. At first I couldn't believe it was him. My heart started to pound, my whole body shook. I cannot even describe the joy I felt when I saw him. The man who I had been preaching about was coming to greet me. He did not shake my hand like a regular man would. He embraced me like a brother, so lovingly and caring. People started to gather around us. Whispers and questions arose around the crowd, many asking if that was really Jesus. I proclaimed to the crowd, "I told many of you before that there was a man coming after me who is greater than me. This man has come today. The chosen one, the one who deserves our praise." I began to choke up. I was crying tears of joy. Jesus smiled at me and wiped away my tears, and we hugged again. I was so happy to see him again. But Jesus had something special in store for me. I just didn't know it yet. With his disciples behind him, he asked me to baptize him. I first I thought he was joking, but then I realized he was serious. Who am I to baptize the Son of God! He should be the one baptizing me! I told Jesus this. I was troubled by this question and I let him know it. But then Jesus revealed himself to me. He said, "It's ok. We are supposed to do this. It is right to do this. It is the will of God." And like that all my fears went away. Jesus' words were so reassuring and true. I could not say no. Who can say no to Jesus! So then we went into the river. He took off his over garment and stood in the river. Then I baptized him, whole heartedly knowing that this was right. I heard the voice of God saying "This is my son, whom I love and am proud of", as did many others. I then knew 110% that Jesus was the one. I had known before, but now others knew, and I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I have no desire now but to praise his name and share the joy he has given me with others. People say I'm crazy. I am. I am crazy in love.



Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand Jesus' baptism, attend a Baptism. Spend some time getting to know someone in your family or parish that you know very little about. Ask them to tell you about their childhood. Your relationship with Jesus deepens as you spend time with Him and you may even start to recognize Him in some new faces and in the stories they share with you.