

REFLECTION FOR THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

This day's liturgy celebrates the Baptism of Jesus, evoking the moment when Jesus, mingling in the crowd, approached John the Baptist to be baptised. We have to start by saying that John's baptism was just a rite of purification. With this rite people affirmed their reality as sinners and their desire to be purified, to be washed clean of their guilt and to live a life according to the Lord's commandments. Jesus was sinless but he needed to mingle with us to take on our sinful reality in order to cleanse us from sin. He entered the waters of the Jordan with the crowd, to be seen as one of us and to make the waters a baptismal font for his disciples, waters that purify and seal our divine sonship.

Let us delve a little deeper into these aspects through the readings we've heard:

The first reading, taken from the Book of Isaiah, tells us about a mysterious 'Servant' chosen by God and sent to men to establish a world of justice and endless peace. Invested with the Spirit of God, he will carry out this mission with humility and simplicity, without resorting to power, imposition or arrogance, because these schemes are not those of God.

Christian believers have always seen in Jesus Christ the fulfilment of the prophecies about this 'Servant'. Jesus also presents himself as the one on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests and who will go and proclaim the Good News to the poor and to bring justice to the nations. And he will fulfil this mission through the paths of humility, self-giving, mercy, and love.

The second reading, taken from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, shows Peter affirming in the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion who had called him to be baptised, this same idea from the first reading: Jesus is the beloved Son whom the Father had sent into the world to carry out his plan of salvation for all humanity. And Jesus took on this project by 'going out into the world to do good' and freeing all those who were oppressed. Today his disciples are called to continue his mission, to take the message of the Gospel to everyone along the paths of peace, justice, truth, love and service to their brothers and sisters.

In the Gospel, Jesus appears to fulfil the prophetic promises of the first reading. It recounts the episode of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. John was baptising those who came to him on the banks of the Jordan, but John the Baptist himself tells the people that he was baptising with water, but someone was coming who would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire. And in Jesus Christ, after receiving baptism and while he was in prayer, "*the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit*

descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven: 'You are my beloved Son: with you I am well pleased'". Jesus, then, is the Son and 'Servant' sent by the Father, on whom the Spirit rests and whose mission is to bring about the liberation of men, to proclaim the Good News to the poor, to heal contrite hearts, to sow the seed of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, being Lord, became a Servant so that we could be freed from our prisons and become children of God in him. Through baptism we are incorporated into Christ, the Spirit comes upon us and we become Children of God. Let us live our baptism as children-servants, looking to Jesus as our Master and model. Let us learn from him to always say yes to God's will, to become servants of the Lord and witnesses to his Kingdom of love and peace.

Amen