

Baptism of the Lord B



*Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights. (Is 42:1)*

First Reading

Isaiah 42:1-4.6-7

Thus says the Lord: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have endowed him with my spirit that he may bring true justice to the nations.

He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets. He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame.

Faithfully he brings true justice; he will neither waver, nor be crushed until true justice is established on earth, for the islands are awaiting his law.

I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand and formed you; I have appointed you as covenant of the people and light of nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to free the captives from prison, and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.

Second Reading

Acts 10:34-38

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household: "The truth I have now come to realise," he said "is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.

It is true, God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ – but Jesus Christ is Lord of all men. You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil."

In the course of his preaching, John the Baptist said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."

Meditation

The annual season of light draws to a close. January may be quite bleak in northern climates, but the solstice has passed. Light has won out over darkness and we have celebrated the bright hope of salvation. We have ritualised once more the cherished customs of Christmas.

Families, stores, and communities regularly package their Christmas decor and store it away for eleven months. For the Church, our season of birth and manifestation is not packed up and stored. The feast of the Baptism of the Lord does not tie up all the loose ends of the plot or neatly summarize the mystery. It remembers one more aspect of Christmas, but it also sets the stage for the week-by-week unfolding of the mystery of Jesus through the recounting of each synoptic gospel.

The evangelists present the baptism of Jesus at the start of his public life because the varied details of their accounts unveil his identity. Like the servant praised in Isaiah, Jesus has come to do God's will. He is consecrated in the Spirit. He is the beloved Son.

These proclamations about Jesus summon us to fuller awareness of the paschal mystery. Through baptism we are the body of Christ, facing the same mystery of dying and rising. We too must be open to the Spirit, conscious of our relationship to God. Thus we can live a life of discipleship and begin to understand the true meaning of history.

From his fullness we have all received everything that we need so that we are able to reveal to the world the Word that brings life. This is Christmas.

Baptism of the Lord B



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First Reading

Isaiah 55:1-11

Thus says the Lord: Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy corn, without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk. Why spend money on what is not bread, your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live.

With you I will make an everlasting covenant out of the favours promised to David. See, I have made of you a witness to the peoples, a leader and a master of the nations. See, you will summon a nation you never knew, those unknown will come hurrying to you, for the sake of the Lord your God, of the Holy One of Israel who will glorify you.

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked man abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him, to our God who is rich in forgiving; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks. Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

Second Reading

1 John 5:1-9

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth. So there are three witnesses, the Spirit, water and blood; and the three of them coincide. If we accept the testimony of human witnesses, God's testimony is greater, for this is God's testimony which he gave about his Son.

In the course of his preaching, John the Baptist said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

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