

Reflection on the Baptism of the Lord for Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>  
January 2021

*'I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'* Mk 1:8

In the Gospel from St Mark we hear how John went about baptising people calling them to repentance and forgiveness of their sins. So it was very strange that Jesus, who was of course without sin, should ask John for baptism. John immediately realised that this was not necessary and announced that he was unworthy even to kneel down and undo the strap of Jesus' sandals.

You could be forgiven if you thought this gospel is all about baptism, but it isn't. It's really more about the revelation of God as a Trinity of three persons.

It is at the Baptism of Jesus that God reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Baptism of Jesus is more about the revelation of Jesus as God and his relationship with the Father and the Spirit. As soon as he came up out of the water the heavens were torn apart and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove.

In a way this was Jesus' anointing by the Spirit as the Son of God at the beginning of his public ministry. Then the Father's voice is heard from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on you.' Jesus of Nazareth is therefore revealed as the incarnate Son of God, true God from true God, Light from Light, begotten and not made as we say every Sunday in the Creed. This is the central belief of the Catholic faith and a doctrine which binds most Christians together.

This is also what makes our faith unique among all other religions in the world. Although many may believe in one God, it is only Christianity that teaches that God became a man like us and that God is three persons in One; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that approximately 2020 years ago God entered time and space; he entered human history in a small place called Bethlehem with a Mother we know as Mary and a foster Father we know as Joseph. This is the great event we have just celebrated as Christmas, the feast of the Incarnation; God becomes flesh like one of us in all things except sin. We believe in Jesus Christ because he is God, the Word made flesh.

So this is what the Baptism of Jesus is really all about but what about our own baptism? We may not have heard the Father's voice from the heavens or seen the Holy Spirit descend on us in the form of a dove but our baptism is the greatest thing that has ever happened to us. We are baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At our baptism we receive the life of the Holy Trinity into our souls and we are freed from the bonds of original sin and become children of God. We are filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, gifts which become more significant when we are confirmed.

We are welcomed as members of the Church and given the rights and responsibilities of being Christians. We receive the gift of faith, the Catholic faith, and all because someone, most likely our parents, brought us to the church, to the font, where we were baptised. Through the pouring of water and the invocation of the Trinity we are able to share in the death of Jesus Christ and rise with him to a new life.

Our greatest responsibility as Christians is to give praise and thanks to God. We do this most perfectly at Mass when we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice of prayer and praise to God. We celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus at every Mass by offering the sacrifice of Jesus to his Father and then we receive Jesus as real food and drink when we receive Holy Communion.

If we know we have drifted from our baptismal calling and the life of grace then the sacraments of confession and Holy Communion are the means through which we experience the mercy of God and be restored to the life of grace, the life we first received at our baptism and we pray for a continual renewal of our faith through that life giving grace.

Deacon Kevin