

## THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

*Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17*

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom am well pleased."

### REFLECTION 1:

### REVISITING OUR BAPTISM

Most of us who were baptised as infants cannot remember the moment of our baptism. Fortunately, we have an abundance of symbols and rituals to anchor us in our 'baptismal memory'. When we pass by the baptismal font in our Church we can 'remember' our baptism. Anytime we have the pleasure of being in the congregation at a baptism ceremony we can 'remember' our baptism. We can look at photographs or take out the family christening gown or baptismal candle to have a visual reminder of our initiation into the Christian faith. But most significantly whenever we turn to one of the Gospel passages that tell the story of Jesus' baptism, such as today's passage from Matthew (Matt 3: 13-17) we can 'remember' our baptism in an especially powerful way.

Jesus comes to the Jordan, is baptised by John and everything changes. The sky breaks open. The spirit comes, announcing the fulfilment of the prophetic promise for which the people of Israel were waiting. And when we are baptised the same thing happens – the spirit comes down and makes itself known, claiming us as children of God and calling us to anchor ourselves in God's love.

The fact of our baptism ought to have continuing significance and impact upon our lives. It ought to be a continual source of strength and comfort. Baptism isn't just a one-off event but an ongoing reality. We have a new identity in Christ. Every day we are to live out the meaning of our baptism. To say 'I belong to God' is to find new strength to meet the difficult situations life presents us with. To remember our baptism is to gain a new sense of personal responsibility for our lives - we are accountable to God for the life we live.

The simple act of entering a Catholic Church and blessing ourselves with water from the font at the entrance is a way of remembering our baptismal commitment - in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We remember who we are as we enter God's presence. And it makes even more sense to put water on our foreheads as we leave the Church and go out into the world – for there the battles are fought. This is a month in which many of us gathered in this Church are feeling overwhelmed. In January, the holidays are over and the bills are looming. Some people are dealing with a variety of post-holiday emotions; others already feel that they have failed in their new year's resolutions. The message of Jesus' baptism and a reminder of our own is needed at a time such as this:

"Lord we are yours, help us to know it,

To know it in the depth of our hearts and to act accordingly,

Through Christ our Lord. Amen'.

## REFLECTION 2:

## BEING A GODPARENT

To be chosen as a godparent is a special honour. You, above all others, have been entrusted with the responsibility to participate in this child's Christian life and education. This privilege offers you the opportunity to develop a mutually enriching spiritual relationship – one that will last throughout this life and beyond. There are many ways you can nurture this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to your godchild. Among them are:

1. Celebrate the anniversary of the day of Baptism each year with a visit, a call, a card or a text or keep a photographic record of your godchild on this special anniversary as he or she grows up.
2. As your godchild grows, listen to and share in the struggles and triumphs of living a Christian life, and keep yourself informed on Christian doctrine and values, to be able to answer questions as they arise.
3. Encourage a consistent life of faith through special cards, letters, or gifts which celebrate holy events- Christmas, Easter, and personal growth events, graduation, first job, engagement (Gift suggestions: a bible, spiritual book, rosary, religious jewellery, gift certificate for religious goods or books, retreat opportunity).
4. Participate in, or send assurance of prayer, as your godchild receives the other sacraments, particularly First Communion and Confirmation, which complete initiation into the Church community.
5. Be supportive of your godchild's parents in their role as the primary religious educators of their child.
6. And most importantly, become a model of Christian living for your godchild, through daily prayer, virtue and active participation in parish life and liturgy.

By living a Christian life in partnership with your godchild, both of you will experience the great joy of sharing a life of faith.