



Encountering Christ
Prayerfully preparing for the
Sunday Mass and praying in
particular for our school families



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 13th January 2019 - The Baptism of the Lord

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 13th January 2019 - The Coming of the Spirit (Luke 3:15-16. 21-22)

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."



3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

Luke does not tell us who baptised Jesus. In Luke the story of John the Baptist ends with his promise of one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit - then John is arrested. At the baptism itself all Luke's concentration is on the coming of the Spirit. Indeed, it is hardly an account of the baptism at all, for the baptism is only a time marker for the coming of the Spirit when "Jesus, after his own baptism, was at prayer". Jesus' mission begins with the coming of the Spirit. In the same way, Luke's second volume (the Acts of the Apostles) begins with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. It is as though Luke wants to show the importance of the Spirit from beginning to end of the Christian life. And this is the case: in both books the part played by the Spirit directs all the action. The same is still true in the Christian community today, though sometimes human stubbornness and blindness does its best to impede the leadership and guidance of the Spirit. Most of us are artists at blocking the Spirit when the Spirit's promptings are inconvenient!

What does Luke's account of Jesus' baptism tell us about the Holy Spirit?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 13th January 2019



First Reading: *Console my People, Console them*

Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11

"Console my people, console them," says your God. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call her that her time of service is ended, that her sin is atoned for, that she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for all her crimes." A voice cries, "Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord. Make a straight highway for our God across the desert. Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley; then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion. Shout with a loud voice, joyful messenger to Jerusalem. Shout without fear; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God." Here is the Lord coming with power, his arm subduing all things to him. The prize of his victory is with him; his trophies all go before him. He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

The reading from Isaiah for today is the joyful song which opens the second part of Isaiah. After the 70 years of the Exile the people of Israel are looking forward to the return to Jerusalem, aware that they are soon to be released from their captivity. They have 'served their sentence' in Babylon and their sin has been forgiven. The Lord will lead them in joy across the great desert as he led them across the desert at Exodus, and will manifest his glory again. For Christians the excitement is that John the Baptist picks up this message as he prepares for the coming of Christ. We can see the fulfilment of this passage from Isaiah in the coming of Christ in history and in his future return in glory. Christ brings about his Kingship of God, but it is for us Christians, as we await his coming again, to show by our lives the glory and the love and the generosity of God to a world which refuses to see the splendour of his coming. This is the daunting responsibility of those who bear the name of 'Christian', who see in Jesus the manifestation of God's reign.

How today do we best manifest God's reign and fulfil our mission as Church?

Second Reading: *Reborn in the Cleansing Waters*

Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what he has to do is give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good. When the kindness and love of God our saviour were revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life.

The phrase in this reading which seizes the attention is "he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit". Is this referring to Jesus' baptism or to yours and mine? My guess is that in the original letter it referred to our baptism, but that, by putting it forward on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the church is referring it to Jesus' baptism as the model of your and my baptism. We received in our baptism the same re-birth as children of God and the same renewal in the Holy Spirit as Jesus did in the Jordan. The image of birth from the waters is a fascinating one, and can be taken on many levels: the ocean as the great, turbulent place from which all life derives, the source of life and fertility for plants, animals and humans, the 'waters' of each mammal's birth. By the waters of baptism we are given a wholly new life as adopted sons of God. We have seen how, in Luke's account of the Baptism of Jesus, the coming of the Spirit is the main focus. On us too the Spirit comes at baptism and empowers us to do all kinds of good works beyond any human ability.

How do we see the Holy Spirit at work in our own particular local Church community?

“ Jesus baptism is the model
of your and my baptism. ”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*

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