

January 12th, The Baptism of the Lord

Opening Prayers:

Gracious God,
whose soul delights in us;
we give you heartfelt thanks and praise,
for in your love for us
you have chosen us and put your Spirit upon us;
immerse us in your grace
and raise us up from the waters
to live our baptismal vows
so that we might faithfully bring forth justice,
open eyes that are blind
and bring the light of your freedom
to those who sit in darkness.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord, the Beloved One,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Isaiah 43:1-7: The people of God felt that God had abandoned them while they were in exile. “Not so!” says the Lord. In fact, the opposite was true. God had redeemed (“purchased”) them back to Himself and promised that in the midst of trouble He would be with them. We use this passage today because we believe that God has redeemed us with the blood of Christ and when we “pass through the waters” (baptism) we are called by a new name: People of God, Body of Christ, Sons and Daughters of God!

thus says the Lord,

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom,

Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my sight,
and honoured, and I love you,
I give people in return for you,
nations in exchange for your life.
Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
I will say to the north, 'Give them up',
and to the south, 'Do not withhold;
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.'

Acts 8:14-17: *Philip was the first person to preach about Jesus outside of Jewish territory, in Samaria. Some Samaritans were baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit. Word got back to the apostles in Jerusalem about this. They sent Peter and John to our first parish "Episcopal Visit!" Once Peter and John laid hands on the newly baptized, they did in fact receive the Holy Spirit. Baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit are still connected in our Baptismal Liturgy today (see the prayer in the middle of p. 160, BAS, and the phrase "...by water and the Holy Spirit...").*

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22: *People were flocking to John because of his urgent message to prepare ("repent of sin") for the imminent arrival of the Messiah. People began to wonder if John himself was the Messiah – something he vehemently denied. While John baptized with water, the "Mightier One" will baptize with the Holy Spirit, he said. Against all expectations, Jesus arrived to be baptized by John! John's baptism is different from Christian baptism. John's was only to wash away sin. Our baptism is a baptism into Christ's cross and resurrection: we die to this world's destructive power and share in Christ's new life and Kingdom even now.*

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by

saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Jesus entered the water of John's baptism and the Spirit descended in the form of a dove. And the voice of the Father confirms it with spoken word: "This is my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Again, water, Word and Spirit come together. This is the beloved Son of the Father who is in the water, upon whom the Spirit descends. He is the Christ, the Anointed One of God, come to save His people and the world from Sin and Death. He is the suffering Servant of God, in whom is God's delight, who bears the sins of the many and by whose wounds we are healed from the sting of Death. Water alone cannot wash away Sin. Water alone cannot bring the Spirit down from heaven. Water alone cannot tear the heavens open and bring the voice of the Father.

The Word must be in the water. Jesus, the Word Incarnate, stands there in the Jordan River as the Sinner for us all, submitting to John's baptism of repentance, though He has nothing of which to repent. The Incarnate Word and water come together, and the heavens are opened, the Spirit comes down and lights upon Him, the Father speaks His approval. A new creation has come.

He entered our disordered world quietly, when all the world was occupied with taxes and a census, when only a handful of shepherds took notice of Him on the day of His birth, when Bethlehem was full and only place for Him was a manger. He was visited by Magi who came and honored Him as a king even as Herod sought to kill Him and Israel largely ignored Him. He grew up on the obscurity of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, learning His surrogate father's trade, working our work day with all its frustrations and uncertainties. For thirty years the world had no idea He was there.

And then came that fateful day on the banks of the Jordan, when Jesus stood before John and insisted, yes demanded, that He be baptized alongside the prostitutes and tax collectors and all the rejected sinners who had come to John to wash away their sins. Matthew tells us that John objected and would have prevented it. But Jesus insisted. "It is proper for us to do this in order to fulfill all righteousness." This is how righteousness is fulfilled. This is how the Law of God is satisfied. This is how order is restored. The Son becomes the Sinner so that sinners might become sons and daughters of God.

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Concluding Prayers

Let us pray for those who lead believing communities throughout the world, that they might lead us on the path of faithful discipleship.

Let us pray for the baptized, that we might follow in the path of John the Baptizer and always acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Let us pray for all those preparing for baptism and for their families, and for our newest members, that they might draw closer to the servant who is God's chosen, the light of the nations, and our light.

Let us pray for the healing of all those who are blind to God's impartial love; for the Charles, our king, and all in authority, that they share all the world's resources equitably so that there might be reconciliation among nations, races, creeds, and we also pray for the gifts of unity and peace.

Let us pray for the consolation and support of all who are imprisoned, physically, spiritually, and emotionally; for all who are ill, especially for those dying of incurable diseases and those who care for them.

Open the heavens,
almighty Father,
and pour out your Spirit
upon your people.
Renew the power of our baptismal cleansing
and fill us with zeal for good deeds.
Let us hear your voice once again,
that we might recognize in your beloved Son
our hope of inheriting eternal life.
We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

For our Parish.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful:
Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence
especially at this time when some feel they cannot gather together.
Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more
with the light of the everlasting Gospel.
Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour;
and those who are walking in the way of life,
keep steadfast unto the end.

Give patience to the sick and afflicted,
and renew them in body and soul.
Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.
Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace,
and make us all to be fruitful in good works;
O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together
we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen*