

8. January 2023

## The Baptism of the Lord



Mt 3:13-17

*Then Jesus appeared: he came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him, with the words, 'It is I who need baptism from you, and yet you come to me!' But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that uprightness demands.' Then John gave in to him. And when Jesus had been baptised he at once came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And suddenly there was a voice from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'*

Perhaps we can imagine a little of John the Baptist's amazement... The One of whom he had heard so much about is coming to him. Now this Jesus comes before him - to be baptised by him. What an amazement for the Baptist!

Actually, it should be the other way round: it is he who should be baptised by Jesus. As John himself says, he is not worthy even to untie the strap of Jesus' sandals (cf. Jn 1:27). The Baptist knows that the One before him is greater than he is (cf. Mk 1:7). He himself baptises only with water, Jesus, on the other hand, with fire (cf. Mt 3:11) Yes, John knows who is the one approaching him!

Nevertheless, John too, like all of us, is invited to enter the school of the Lord, in order to know God in his Being ever better and ever more deeply.

Indeed, the glory of God is infinitely great, and in eternity, when we can behold it, it will be wonder after wonder, and we shall never tire of loving Him. But here on earth, God's greatness manifests itself above all in the service of love. We know that it will be this love that will carry Jesus to the Cross; love for his Father and for us men.

It is the love that serves!

God, the incomparable one, the one who is perfect in himself, comes to serve us. That is why Jesus says to John: *"Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that uprightness demands."*

Jesus enters human history, with all its sins. He Himself became true man, to pay man's debt, so that through Him we could attain forgiveness. This grace becomes effective when people accept the forgiveness that God offers them.

John certainly intuited something of what Jesus wanted; but he did not yet fully understand it... Nevertheless, he was obedient to the Word of the Lord, and so he baptised Jesus.

As soon as the Lord came up out of the waters, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Jesus is one with the Spirit, and we also hear the voice of the Father exclaiming, *"This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him."*

The Holy Trinity is present! What happens here, according to the testimony of Scripture, is what is granted to us in Holy Baptism, since we are baptised in the Name of the Most Holy Trinity: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The whole life of the Holy Trinity must unfold in us! The Spirit of God descends upon us, just as He descended upon the Virgin Mary. Jesus is to take more and more form in us, and this happens when we listen to the motions of the Spirit and follow them....

We are called to become more and more like God and to serve other people in his Spirit! As we understand what God is like, how He pours out His grace on us, how we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, how the love of the Father embraces us, how the

Spirit of God, who is love, is displayed in us, we will become more and more grateful, and praise Him for all that He does for us.

God wants us to see our neighbour as our brother. This also applies to people who are still far away from God. They have yet to find their way to God, so that what He has prepared for them can unfold in their lives, and this is what we are to witness to in our lives, because every person is offered the grace of Christ and the forgiveness of their sins, so that they can awaken to their true dignity!

In this way, we Christians can serve people by becoming servants of love.