

PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

9 – 10 JANUARY 2021



SUNDAY REFLECTION

We begin this time after Christmas with the Baptism of the Lord, but within a month we will find ourselves celebrating the Presentation of the Lord, (2 Feb). Both are Christmas feasts, more precisely Epiphany feasts. Both are closely linked with the great mystery of the Son of God becoming man and revealed to the world. Although the Presentation obviously took place many years before the Baptism of Jesus, the unfolding of our Sunday readings this year allows us to see the Baptism as a point of departure and the Presentation as a point of arrival. We can do this by moving the Presentation forward in time seeing the Temple where the young Jesus was presented by His parents in light of the heavenly Temple where we will all one day join in praise and worship of God.

The four Sundays – starting with the Baptism and ending with the Presentation – then become a voyage of discovery as an extension of the Epiphany season. During these four weeks we will meet a rich cast of characters, beginning with Jesus Himself and ending, appropriately enough, with Mary His mother. We will see how different people encounter and experience God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These different reactions then become part of our reactions as we continue our personal and community voyages of discovery, growing closer ourselves to our God who is Trinity.

Our starting point for this journey is, first, to hear the invitation through the words of a poem of the prophet Isaiah: 'Come to the water, all you who are thirsty', and the response from

another poem of Isaiah: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.' Through the Scriptures God is always calling us and inviting us to learn His ways, with the promise of a rich reward if we do so. The Scriptures also allow us to respond to the call and invitation as we sing hymns of joy in response: the joy of allowing God into our lives so that we proclaim His mighty deeds to all the peoples. Above all, we proclaim that Jesus is our Savior. This invitation is for us, and the response is the choice of each one of us. But always we must refer our call and our response to the Person who most profoundly felt that call coming to him – and most profoundly responded to the call with joy in the depths of his heart: Jesus Himself.

What is special about the baptism of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark is how the story of the baptism becomes a personal encounter of Jesus with God His Father. It is hard for us to read the Gospels from the point of view of a fully human Jesus. We are so used to two thousand years of Christian reflection upon Jesus, and reading this Gospel of Mark in light not just of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which include accounts of the childhood of Jesus, but also of the Gospel of John which opens by presenting the pre-existent Word of God. Reading the Gospel of Mark on its own terms, the story begins with the adult Jesus. If we take Jesus in all His humanity, then He would have approached His Baptism by John with an eager sense of anticipation. But what happened afterwards could well have taken Him completely by surprise – so dramatic was the experience that Jesus immediately went into the wilderness to reflect upon and come to terms with what had happened at the Baptism. That the Spirit is described by the Gospel of Mark as the agent both of the Baptism and of sending into the wilderness merely heightens the power of the occasion in the life of Jesus. Jesus has heard His call from God: He will respond to it with His whole life and there find joy, in the end the joy of the resurrection

STEWARDSHIP: Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. The U.S. bishops pastoral on stewardship reminds us that Baptism gives all of His disciples a share in His priestly work and calls them "to offer up the world and all that is in it – especially themselves – to the Lord of all."

READINGS FOR SECOND SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

17 JAN '21

1 Sm. 3:3-10, 19: Samuel is called by God, declares himself open to the mission from heaven, and carries it out with fidelity.

1 Cor. 6:13-15, 17-20: St. Paul tells the Christian people of Corinth, a city of great moral laxity, that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. They should be used for the glory of God and not for sexual gratification outside of marriage

Jn. 1:35-42: John encourages his disciples to follow Jesus as 'Lamb of God'. They stay with Him that day and, on the following morning, one of them, Andrew, communicates his discovery of the Messiah to his brother, Simon, who also becomes a disciple.

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ORDINARY TIME:

The term appears to be generic, but actually highlights its spiritual focus.

After The Christmas Season for a brief period up to the beginning of Lent and then following Pentecost the Church enters into what is now called the season of "Ordinary Time." But what does that really mean? Is it some sort of generic season in the Church that has no focus?

On the contrary, Ordinary Time has a specific focus even though the English name for it can be confusing. In Latin this period of time is called “Tempus Per Annum,” more literally translated as “time during the year.” The English translators chose to present it as “Ordinary Time,” which has at its root the Latin word “ordo,” or in English “order.” In one sense this season takes its name from the ordinal numbers by which the Sundays are known (Second, Third, Fourth, etc. Sunday in Ordinary Time).

In a deeper sense, though, Ordinary Time can be seen as a “time of order” in the Church’s year. What “order” does it have?

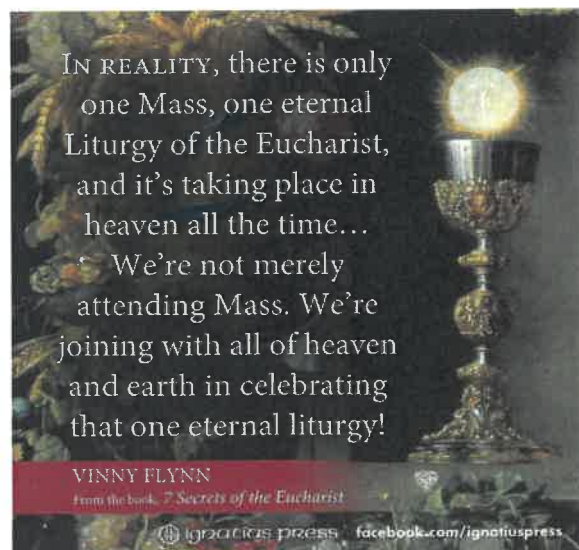
The USCCB explains:

Christmas Time and Easter Time highlight the central mysteries of the Paschal Mystery, namely, the incarnation, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Sundays and weeks of Ordinary Time, on the other hand, take us through the life of Christ. This is the time of conversion. This is living the life of Christ. Ordinary Time is a time for growth and maturation, a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into history until all things are finally caught up in Christ. The goal, toward which all of history is directed, is represented by the final Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Ordinary Time is a specific season in the Church that focuses on the life of Christ during His three years of public ministry. That is why the start of Ordinary Time begins with the Baptism of the Lord, as that is the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. The Second Sunday of Ordinary Time follows suit, focusing on the Wedding Feast at Cana, also known as Jesus’ first public miracle.

The color for this liturgical season is green, which is most associated with growth. Ordinary Time is then viewed as a time of growing in our knowledge and love of Jesus. It is a time “ordered” to spiritual growth, walking in the footsteps of Jesus’s public life.

So while the season’s name may appear to be an afterthought, it is not without meaning.



THE MASS SIGNIFICANCE MEANING

We, the Church refers to the Mass as the “source and summit of the faith”. What does this mean on a general level, to us as a community and to ourselves individual? Why do we come over and over? Are we engaged? What is actually taking place; is it only a ritual or do each of the actions, prayers, etc. that we truly understand. Beginning this week and on through the future I would like to explore with you various aspects of the Mass.

To judge the “quality” of the Christian life of a community is always a difficult task, and perhaps a foolhardy one. There are so many factors that should be taken into account. And the most important of them are hidden!

Nevertheless, if the Holy Mass is the central act of our Catholic life, then Mass-going must surely remain one of the most indicative of these factors. With good reason therefore we consider the number of people coming to Mass, not only on Sundays but also very specially on weekdays. With even better reason we try to assess the “quality” of their participation in the Mass; their understanding of its nature and their application to their own lives of what it should mean for them. And we often think of the ways in which we can help them.

This is where our catechists on the Mass must come in: a constant catechesis, with big groups and small groups, with Sundays congregations and very particularly with the weekday ones; a constant and simple catechesis that is not afraid to drive home the basic points by dint of repetition.

The following commentaries one for each day of the month were first prepared for school use, with the idea of repeating them once every two or three months. They can easily be adapted for use on a different basis. The person-to-person style is no doubt more suited to the spoken word or to be put down in writing, but it seemed preferable not to change it.

Christ’s action

The Holy Mass is the holiest thing we have here on earth. Why? Because it is the action of Christ. The main thing in the Mass is not what is read from the Holy Scriptures, even though this is the word of God and should be listened to as such. The main thing in the Mass is not what the priest preaches in his sermon nor what the people do or sing. The main thing is what Christ does. And what does Christ do in the Holy Mass? He offers Himself for us, as He offered Himself on the Cross. He sacrifices Himself for us. That is why we say that the Mass is the same Sacrifice as that of the Cross renewed in an un-bloody manner on the altar. On the altar just on the Cross, Christ offers His body and blood for us. The difference is that on the Cross His body and blood were visible to the eyes of those who were present while in the Mass they are hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. But they are really present. This is the great fact. In each Mass, Christ is really present and renews the Sacrifice of the Cross.

Love for the Mass

“A man who fails to love the Mass fails to love Christ.” To love the Mass is a guarantee for salvation. But to love the Mass does not mean just being present and no more. It means to be present with faith and devotion. It means to take part in the Mass, realizing what it is: the Sacrifice of the Cross renewed on the altar; and realizing that when we go to Mass, we go, as it were, to Calvary. And that we should be present there, like our Blessed Lady beside the Cross, in loving contemplation of Christ who offers Himself lovingly for each one of us.

Faith

The Holy Eucharist is the "mystery of faith." Without faith, all you would see is bread and wine being offered, no more. Without faith, the most you could see in this is a gesture, a symbol, nothing more. With faith you know that at the moment of the Consecration which is when the priest says, "This is My Body," "This is the cup of My Blood" the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ who is then really present as God and as Man sacrificing Himself for us on the altar as He sacrificed Himself on the cross. If you come to Mass without faith, or with little faith you will easily get distracted and perhaps even bored. What a sad thing to get bored with Christ's sacrifice! Would we have been bored if we had been present at Calvary? If we hadn't faith, perhaps we would. Or at least we would have completely failed to understand what the death of that Man nailed to the cross really meant. You will only begin to understand what the death of that Man nailed to the cross really meant. You will only begin to understand the greatness of the Mass if you have faith. Stir up your faith. And then you will always be amazed at the Mass, you will realize that it is the greatest thing we possess here on earth.

ICON BAPTISM of CHRIST

Commemoration of the Baptism of Christ is an ancient tradition in the church. Icons for each major feast day in the Liturgical Calendar have been produced since the earliest days of the Byzantine era. The image used in this version follows closely the ancient prototypes. This event is described in all four Gospels (Mt. 3:13-17, Mk. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21-22, and Jn. 1:29-34).

Theology & symbolism

The Baptism of Christ has two aspects of great importance to all Christians. First, it was the occasion on which the Trinity was revealed to us. The Spirit descended from Heaven like a dove, the Son bowed His head in submission to receive the water from John the Baptist, and the voice of the Father spoke: "This is My Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17). Second, while performing the act of ritual cleaning prescribed by Jewish ritual, Christ established the New Testament sacrament of Baptism as a sign of membership in His church. John the Baptist officiates at the ceremony, his right hand upon Jesus' head and his left raised in prayer. An Orthodox hymn expresses what John may have felt. "...I do not dare to hold Thy most pure head; sanctify Thou me, O Lord, by Thy divine manifestation." John is dressed in camel skins (Mt. 1:6) but also wears a red robe symbolic of his priestly role in the scene. Christ stands in the midst of the Jordan, head bowed in submission, right hand extended in the ancient gesture of blessing; index finger extended, middle and little fingers curved, ring finger and thumb crossed forming "ICXC," the Greek monogram of Jesus Christ. A white cloth girds His loins, white becoming from this moment the symbol of membership in His church. His halo, iconographic symbol of sanctity, is inscribed with a cross and the Greek letters omega, omicron, and nu. The spell "ho on," which translates as "Who Am," the words used to name God in Exodus 3:14.

The waters of the Jordan appear dark and threatening. To the ancient Jews, water was a symbol of death. Jesus immerses Himself in the water as a sign of His death and burial (Ro. 6:3). The blessing of His hand is conferred on the water, transforming it into a symbol of birth into the new life of Christ. Two spirits are visible in the water, the male on the right is an allegory of the Jordan while the female on the left represents the Red Sea. These remind us of two Old Testament prefiguration of baptism, a passing through water into new life; the dividing of the Jordan by Elisha (2 Kg. 2:14) and dividing of the Red Sea by Moses (Ex. 14:16-21).

The Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove, recalling another Old Testament story. Noah's dove appeared to announce the end of the Flood and the return of life to the world (Gen. 8:11). Here, the Holy Spirit announces the remission of sins and God's mercy toward His people. Three angels stand on the right bank, hands covered by their robes in the ancient Byzantine mark of special respect. They are absent in the Gospel stories of the Baptism, although in each Gospel account, the Baptism is followed by the Temptation in the Desert, and angels minister to Jesus at the conclusion of the forty days (e.g. Mt. 4:11). By their postures they help focus the viewer's attention on Christ.

SAINT OF THE WEEK: HILARY of POITIERS (d.368) 13 JAN

Bishop and Doctor of the Church.

He was a noble born in Poitiers, France, where he was converted to Christianity. In 350, he was made bishop of Poitiers, although he had been married in his younger years. Hilary refused to attend the Synod of Milan, Italy, called by Emperor Constantius II (r. 350-361) in 355, because he would not condemn St. Athanasius with the other Arian heretics. Condemned himself in return and banished, he went to Phrygia (in modern Turkey). In 359 Hilary argued so brilliantly against the Arians that the bishop at Seleucia, in Babylonia (near Baghdad, Iraq), persuaded the emperor to end Hilary's exile. Hilary returned to Poitiers the following year. In 361, Hilary had Arian Bishop Saturninus, who had been responsible for his exile, deposed. Constantius died in the same year, ending Arian domination. He also publicly disputed Auxentius, a major Arian, and defeated him. Hilary died in Poitiers on November 1, and was one of the leading theologians of his era. His treatises include *De Trinitate* (written in exile), *De Synodis* and *Opus Historicum*. He is called "the Doctor of the Divinity of Christ," declared of this rank by Pope Pius IX (r. 1846-1878)

DAILY REFLECTIONS FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME 11 - 16 JANUARY 2021

Monday 11 January

Heb. 1:1-6 God spoke to the people in former times by means of the prophets who delivered His message for Him. Now, however, He has spoken to the people through His own Son. The author emphasizes the fact that Christ is the Son of God and also God, and this highlights the importance of the message we have received and of which the author is a teacher.

Mk. 1:14-20 At the beginning of Ordinary Time we meet Jesus starting out on His public ministry and calling the people to repentance. Today we also see Him calling four fishermen to follow Him, and they do so without hesitation.

Our readings today call us to repentance and to follow Christ with our whole heart, acknowledging the importance of the message and the true identity of Christ.

Tuesday 12 January

Heb. 2:5-12 Again the author speaks at length about the true identity of Jesus. He is at pains to make sure that we do not see Jesus as just another prophet or holy man but as

the Son of God who was perfect in everything. In the closing lines he also tells us that the one who sanctified us – Christ – and we who are sanctified are of the same stock, that is to say, we are all sons and daughters of God, and heaven is our true home.

Mk. 1:21-28 We see Jesus casting out an unclean spirit. The spirit recognized Jesus as the Son of God and acknowledges this. The people are amazed by how He speaks and they too recognize the authority with which Jesus acts.

The readings challenge us today to recognize the authority of Christ and of His Gospel and to conform our lives to it, for only then can we receive eternal life.

Wednesday 13 January St. Hilary of Poitiers

Heb. 2:14-18 Christ, the true Son of God, is also human. It was not the angels who needed to be redeemed but men and women; and so Christ was born of human flesh and became one like us. Only by being one of us could He plead on our behalf and understand our struggles.

Mk. 1:29-39 There are three important points here. The first is that Jesus cured people of their illnesses no matter what their complaint was. This shows how tremendous His power was. Secondly, He went away from the crowd so that He could pray. Even though He was God He still prayed to the Father whenever He could and in private. Thirdly, He did not keep the message and His healing powers for those who were His friends but wanted to travel to spread the Good News as far as possible.

The challenge for us today is to realize that Jesus was human like us and that, being human, He knows our weaknesses. When we acknowledge this we can pray to Him knowing that

He will listen to us and answer us. We must also realize that we too have a duty to spread the Good News wherever we may go.

Thursday 14 January

Heb. 3:7-14 We are reminded today of how the people in the wilderness rebelled against Moses and against God and turned their backs on God. We are also reminded of how He made a new covenant with His people despite all they had done. Paul does not want us to turn from God but to make sure that we help each other to remain faithful and on the path to eternal life as co-heirs with Christ.

Mk. 1:40-45 Jesus cures a leper, not because He had to but because he wanted to. Despite Jesus' warning the leper goes and tells others about the cure and the people begin to flock to Jesus.

The readings remind us today that God wants us to be with Him and will help us when we call to Him and are faithful to Him. God is not going to force salvation on us but will only grant us the salvation promised to us if we want it; and to show that we want it we must be faithful to His Word and to Him.

Friday 15 January

Heb. 4:1-5, 11 The promise made by God is still good and there is no time limit on it. It can be attained by being faithful. The Israelites who rejected Christ were not faithful and therefore have rejected their own salvation.

Mk. 2:1-12 Jesus has His first confrontation with the authorities. A paralytic is brought to Him and when He tells him his sins are forgiven the scribes begin to question. They believed that only God could forgive sins; to prove to them that He was from God and had the authority to forgive, Jesus cures the paralytic who gets up and walks out in front of them.

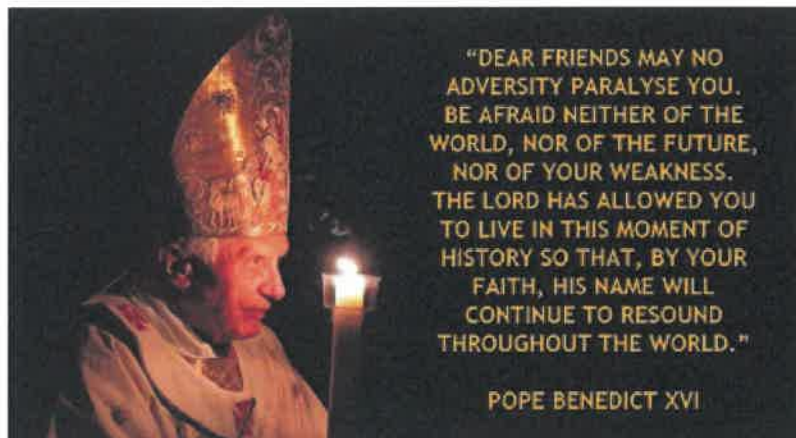
We are called to believe in Christ and to be faithful to God and to the Gospel. We are also reminded that if we sin Christ will forgive us if we ask for forgiveness.

Saturday 16 January

Heb. 4:12-16 The word of God is something powerful and something from which we cannot hide. No matter what we do or say – in public or in the privacy of our hearts – all is known to God. Therefore we must always be on our guard and remain faithful. However, if we fall, Christ will be there to help us and pick us up because He knows our weaknesses, having been human like us.

Mk. 2:13-17 We see Jesus calling the tax collector, Matthew. We also see Him admonished by the Pharisees for eating with those they consider sinners. It is worth noting that those who considered themselves virtuous were the very ones who rejected Christ, while those who acknowledged their sinfulness were the ones who embraced Him.

We are called to follow Christ as readily as Matthew did and to remain faithful to Him always. We are also told not to be like the Pharisees who coldly judged people without mercy, but to live a life of mercy and love.



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK OF SATURDAY 9 JANUARY - SUNDAY 17 JANUARY

Saturday 9 Jan

8:30 a.m. Mass (Preface of Epiphany & Eucharistic Prayer III)

1:30 p.m.- 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Proper Preface & Eucharistic Prayer I

Sunday 10 Jan Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

All Masses Proper Preface & Eucharistic Prayer I

7:00 a.m. Mass
 8:30 a.m. Mass
 11:30 a.m. Mass
 2:00 p.m. Mass Brig Mass
Monday 11 Jan Day Off
Tuesday 12 Jan
 8:30 a.m. Mass Mass for the Sick Eucharistic Prayer III
 10:00 a.m. Inurnment Service
Wednesday 13 Jan St. Hilary, Bishop, Doctor of the Church
 6:30 a.m. Mass Preface of Eucharistic Prayer III
 8:30 a.m. Mass
 10:00 a.m. Mass Willow Creek
Thursday 14 Jan
 8:30 a.m. Mass Preface Eucharistic Prayer II
 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. First Reconciliation Service
 6:30 p.m. Mass Preface Eucharistic Prayer II
Friday 15 Jan
 8:30 a.m. Mass Forgiveness of Sins Preface Eucharistic Prayer II
 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Adoration & Confessions
Saturday 16 Jan
 8:30 a.m. Mass Preface Eucharistic Prayer II
 10:00 a.m. - Noon First Reconciliation Service
 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Confessions
 5:00 p.m. Mass Vigil Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
 Preface Eucharistic Prayer III
Sunday 17 Jan Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
 7:00 a.m. Mass Preface & Eucharistic Prayer II
 8:30 a.m. Mass Preface & Eucharistic Prayer III
 11:30 a.m. Mass Preface & Eucharistic Prayer III
 2:00 p.m. Brig Mass

Up-Coming

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18-23 January
 22 Feb Anniversary of Supreme Court Decision Roe vs Wade Day of Prayer
 24 Jan Sunday of the Word of God
 2 Feb Candlemas Day Feast of the Presentation (Blessing of candles on 30-31 Jan)
 3 Feb St. Blaise (Blessing of throats on 30-31 Jan)
 6 Feb Fr. Donald Calloway Presentation
 17 Feb Ash Wednesday (beginning of Lent)