

# Reflections on Gospel Readings for Sundays and Feast Days

January 2020 Archive

## Second Sunday after Christmas - John 1, 1-18

John's prologue invites us to enter the mystery of God. The whole Gospel according to Saint John shows us the inner life of the Holy Trinity. John starts from the beginning of everything, that is, from the Word and the Word is Jesus. He is the Father's Word. He was at the beginning, i.e. he was before all there was; before angels, before the beginning of the world, before plants, animals, man. He was before it all because the Father created it through him and for him. Further on, John leads us even deeper into the Holy Trinity; "the Word was with God ". Bible scholars explain this sentence as "the Word was fascinated by God", "the Word was close to God", "the Word was turned to God". In these explanations one can sense that there is a bond based on love between God and the Word, and in this bond of love one can find the Mystery of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, the history of the Word is our story that God tells us today. Before we began to exist under the hearts of our mothers, we already existed in the heart of the Word that was at the beginning. God the Father spoke our names to the Word - Jesus, and the Word spoke our names to the Father. We were created in the love between the Father and the Son. That is why there is a place inside us that St. Paul calls the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Let us always remember that God in the Trinity lives in us with all power and love, let Him give us the strength to work on ourselves, that we may become better, more loving God and neighbour.

Amen +++

*Fr. Michał Żarkowski CFMD4*

## *Baptism of the Lord- Matthew 3, 13-17*

*“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptised by him.”*

Today we celebrate the baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Baptism of Jesus was the second of what we traditionally call “Epiphany” events. Epiphany means literally “revealing” or “shining forth”. Last week we celebrated the first of the Epiphany events – that of the revealing of the infant Jesus to the Magi who recognised him not only to be born King of the Jews but acknowledged him as God by offering him incense, the traditional offering to a deity (which is why, in many churches, incense is still offered), and they came to pay him homage. In this second Epiphany event Jesus is revealed as God’s Son when a voice from heaven was heard declaring him as such. The third Epiphany event is reported only by John in his gospel of the seven signs and the first of those signs was the wedding at Cana when Jesus worked his first miracle, that of changing water into wine.

Water, this natural compound, is the source of life. Our bodies are over 2/3 water in composition. Doctors recommend that we drink at least 8 glasses of it a day. Even back in the 18th century John Wesley, the father of Methodism, advocated the consumption of at least 2 pints of water a day. We rely on warm water for our physical hygiene, cold water to brush our teeth each day, boiling water for the all-important cup of tea, rain water to hydrate the crops, and the flowers and grass in the garden, soapy water to wash our clothing, our dishes, and our cars, and an abundance of water to sail our boats. In short, we rely on water to live. We need lots of it, especially in the age of dishwashers, washing machines, and car washes.

Is it any surprise then that water features so prominently in the ancient world? When nothing existed but chaos, the Spirit of God swept across the dark waters and brought forth light. When the people of God were slaves in Egypt, God led them to freedom through parted waters. In the fullness of time God sent his only Son Jesus Christ, nurtured in the water of the womb, to be our saviour. As we recall today in our Gospel reading, Jesus was himself baptised in the waters of the Jordan. After his baptism, Jesus continually met people in the context of water. He turned water in to wine; he encountered a woman at a well, he healed lepers through the waters of a

pool; he called disciples from a life of work on the water as fishermen; he calmed the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee; he walked on water in one his most famous miracles.

This account of the baptism of Jesus is one of the few that all four gospels contain. I was always fascinated by it because it is so hard to understand. If baptism is about forgiveness and the washing away of sin, then why was the sinless Jesus in need of baptism? John the Baptist himself thought it odd and, as our gospel reading reports, "...would have prevented him". The answer lies in the fact that forgiveness of sin is only one of many elements that we take on in baptism. We cannot forget that death is a key component of baptism. When we are baptised we are baptised into Christ's death. We die to the world that we may be alive to the Kingdom of God. Baptism is as much about the symbol of death as it is forgiveness.

We also cannot forget that adoption is a key component of baptism as well. In baptism, we are claimed by God as God's own and we are sealed with the sign of the cross on our foreheads. Baptism is as much a symbol of adoption as it is of forgiveness.

At the baptism of our Lord, all those gathered around that day at the Jordan may have heard that Epiphanic voice from heaven exclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In baptism, we too are made sons and daughters of God in that we are signed and sealed for this purpose. Even Jesus was baptised; this should give us an indication of the importance of baptism in the life of a Christian.

*Fr. Julian Kent CFMD*

### *Seond Sunday of Ordinary Time - John 1, 29-34*

If you identify as a Christian, you are likely to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. You not only have the Bible to support that belief but also the Sacraments and your own experience as well as of the whole Church, regardless of its particular tradition or denomination.

But if you stop there, if you stop at that stage of „I found him, mission accomplished”, then know that you have not really met Him yet.

„The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost”. Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit empowers you and brings some very specific fruits in you: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (see Epistle to the Galatians 5, 22-23). Those fruits are there to be shared. They are there to be multiplied. They are there to enable you to bring the Good News to each and every person you meet in your life.

You no longer can stay where you are and simply be glad that He has come. His coming means that you must go and „launch out into the deep”. And there is no skipping cross on your way to resurrection.

Maybe today’s the day to leave your smartphone or TV, stop that compulsive masturbation and porn, quit drinking alcohol and smoking weed and just meet the world and by the power of the Holy Spirit proclaim that Jesus is Lord and you are there to be His tool. His tool that will feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive, and bury the dead. When was the last time you actually did that?

That list actually goes on, as you are called also to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to admonish the sinners, to bear patiently those who wrong us, to forgive offenses, to comfort the afflicted, and to pray for the living and the dead.

To be Christian is not to stop when we merely acknowledge that Jesus is God. To be Christian is to become more and more Jesus-like everyday.

And for that may the Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you and remain with you always!

*Fr. Chris CFMD*

### *Third Sunday of Ordinary Time - Matthew 4, 12-23*

#### Darkness and Death

Matthew 4:14-16 This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah: 15 “In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.”

As we read the words, “people who sat in darkness” and “those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,” do we understand the burdens we all carry because of our sins? A prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-4 spoke of One who would shatter the yoke of burden with His Merciful Love. But do we allow our Lord near those burdens we carry? One image of our lives is like they are like a whole mission field, with places our Lord still has to visit. One place of encounter with this merciful love where we can take our burdens and sins is Sacramental Confession. The priest is but a witness. The real encounter is between the penitent and the merciful love of God.

"I ask you: have you ever thought that every time we go to the confessional, there is joy and celebration in heaven? Have you ever thought about that? It is beautiful ... and fills us with great hope, because there is no sin to which we have stooped from which, by the grace of God, we cannot rise up again. There is no person who is beyond recovery, no-one is beyond recovery. Because God never ceases to want what is good for us, even when we sin!" (Pope Francis)

*Fr James Baker CFMD*