

Baptism - Door to the Spirit (1213)

Baptism is the door to the Holy Spirit and to the other sacraments (Council of Florence). **By Baptism, the believer is freed from sin, reborn as God's child, made a member of Christ and of the Church, and given a share in the Church's mission.**

The first Sacrament of initiation; the Sacrament of NEW LIFE.

We know that Jesus had no sin that He needed to be free from. Most humans would be concerned about the image of being baptized with the struggling.

But Jesus wanted to show solidarity with the struggling over His image.

Jesus always put the needs of others over His own needs.

There were four events that occurred during Our Lord's baptism:

Jesus rose from the water as a preview of rising from the dead into life.

The heavens opened lifting the barriers between God and humankind.

The Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove to lead us.

And God the Father spoke a word of affirmation.

This was Jesus' missioning: to go and proclaim that the kingdom of God was in our hands.

"This is the chosen one with whom I am well pleased, upon whom I have put my Spirit."

This might be called Jesus Pentecost experience.

The mission that will be Jesus' is then spelt out in some beautiful phrases over which we could reflect with great profit.

*** He does not cry out or shout aloud**

*** He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame.**

*** He brings true justice ... nor will he be crushed until true justice is established on earth...**

*** I have called you to serve the cause of right...**

*** I have appointed you as covenant of the people and light of the nations: to open the eyes of the blind; to free captives from prison; and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.**

Those final phrases will be quoted by Jesus himself as the proclamation of his mission in the synagogue of his home town, Nazareth (Luke 4:18-10).

God wants this working relationship with all people; this is explained by Peter in the Acts of the Apostles when he visited the house of Cornelius. Now Cornelius was a gentile centurion, but he was a God-fearing man who gave generously to support the Jewish church. He was deeply prayerful and one day while he was praying, an angel appeared to him and instructed him to send for a man called Simon who was also known as Peter. Peter was praying on his rooftop when the men that Cornelius sent found him. But just before they arrived, while Peter was in prayer on his rooftop, he fell into a trance and had a vision of a large sheet unfold before him with birds and reptiles that spread before him. A voice from heaven said: KILL AND EAT! But Peter refused. A second time the voice gave the command and Peter objected saying that he has never eaten anything that was unclean. The voice spoke: What God has made clean you have no right to proclaim profane. After three commands the sheet was lifted up and disappeared. Just as that happened the Centurion's men arrived too take him to visit Cornelius.

God shows no partiality and hears those who fear Him and acts uprightly.

May we all reflect on our own baptism as the beginning of our mission to live in God's grace in our faith community with care for others. And may we all hear God saying to us: **THIS IS MY BELOVED CHILD IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED**