



The Holy Scriptures
are our letters
from home

1st Sunday Ord. Time, Yr C

Baptism of the Lord

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Our Reading begins another Church Year¹, Year C. Throughout the coming twelve months we will be taking our Sundays' texts almost exclusively from the Luke's Gospel. As Jesus began his public ministry at his baptism and just as we began our journey in His Church with our baptisms, and at the start of another Church Year, so, it is appropriate to reflect on Jesus' baptism. Also Luke's Gospel is structured around the notion of a journey with Jesus. This journey motif will frame the context of our Sunday Readings throughout Year C.

Jesus' journey to his Baptism in our text began even before his birth. Luke first related the story of John the Baptist's birth, Lk 1:5-25. Zechariah resisted believing the good news from Angel Gabriel that he and Elizabeth would have a child.² Zechariah's son was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah in Jesus. Then came the Annunciation when Mary believed Gabriel's message and conceived a child through the Holy Spirit, namely Jesus, Lk 1:26-38. Mary immediately goes on a journey to visit Elizabeth pregnant with John, Lk 1:39-56. This visit was the first sharing of the Good News – what was promised is in fact being fulfilled in these impending births (cf Mary's Magnificat³ Lk 1:46-55). At John the Baptist's birth, Lk 1:57-80, Zechariah proudly announces the Good News in his Benedictus³ Lk 1:67-79. Then Jesus' birth is related Lk 2:1-21. The angel announces to the shepherds: *"I am here to give you good news ... a Saviour has been born"*, Lk 2:10-11. The first journey of baby Jesus is with his parents to be presented in the Temple, Lk 2:22-40. Simeon in the Temple in his Nunc Dimittis³ acclamation, Lk 2:29-32, says: *"... all-powerful Master ... my eyes have seen your salvation"*. At twelve years old Jesus, with his family, journeys again to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover where Jesus gets lost/remains in the Temple, Lk 2:41-53. This event points that Jesus, at the right time, will start his public ministry, i.e. 'his Father's business'. Then John the Baptist lives out his role and prepares for Jesus' coming as the Messiah, Lk 3:1-20. John's baptism for repentance is questioned. He predicts (and this is part of our text): *"someone who is coming ... he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire"*, Lk 3:16.

► So, our text is the moment that Jesus (himself the Good News) began his public ministry. This long predicted/promised moment, the coming of our salvation, becomes a reality in Jesus' baptism. From this moment, Jesus begins his journey to the Cross and resurrection.^{4,5}

Read: Luke 3: 15 – 16, 21 – 22

Meditatio: How do I understand the Good News? What does the Good News promise for me? Do I think I need to be saved? Can I get to heaven without my Saviour Jesus – even John the Baptist was nothing compared to Jesus? Are there things of which I am still called to repent – like John's baptism with water for repentance? Do I wonder how close I am to Jesus through my baptism? How do I experience the Holy Spirit's working in my life? Does my faith give a 'fire' to my life? Do I pause to pray in thanks to God after sharing in Holy Communion and/or after celebrating the other Sacraments? Have I felt the closeness of God while praying? What is my image of the Holy Spirit – is a dove⁶ an image for me? Who is God the Father for me – is he a 'voice from heaven'? Do I trust in the continuing graces (favours) of my baptism?

Oratio: Pray that all may believe in the Good News. Pray for another twelve months of a graced journey with Jesus. Pray that we will trust in the graces of Baptism to enable us to be faithful followers of Jesus. Pray that the Holy Spirit will revitalize our lives, as well as, bringing us a true peace in our lives. Pray in thankfulness for all the Sacraments.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Share God's favours with others through service.

✍ Fr Joe

Luke 3: 15 – 16, 21 – 22

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, ‘I baptize you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.’

Now when all the people had been baptized and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.’⁵

Notes:

1 This Feast begins Ordinary Time Week I. Odd numbered years, the weekday readings are from year I. Even numbered years, the weekday readings are from year II.

2 Do we believe that through our baptism we have begun a new life with Jesus?

3 The Magnificat, the Benedictus and the Nunc Dimittis are used each day in the Liturgy of the Hours, the Divine Office – at evening, morning and night respectively.

4 One of the verses skipped in our Reading, Lk 3:17 reads: *“He comes with a winnowing fan to clear his threshing floor and gather the grain into his barn. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”* This expresses in a parable-like way how Jesus will bring about salvation (and judgement).

5 Following our Reading Luke says Jesus’ baptism was when he was 30 yrs. old (Lk 3:23). Luke goes on to give Jesus’ genealogy tracing back to Adam, including David (Lk 3:24-38). That is Jesus has the right pedigree to be the Messiah. Luke then says that Jesus, after his baptism, is filled with the Holy Spirit and is led by the Holy Spirit on a journey into the desert. There he considers his impending role while being tempted (Lk 4:1-13). Jesus then returns to Galilee and begins his public ministry, i.e. his journey to the Cross and resurrection.

6 The dove is a symbol for peace.