

Readings: Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7, Acts 10:34-38, Matthew 3: 13-17



Fr Michael says:

Baptism is THE way of life

Already, at the start of His Mission, we see something of the implications of what Jesus is going to do – take on our sinfulness as He goes down into the water, to rise with the new life that He offers to us if we acknowledge and accept Him as Saviour and Messiah! The Suffering Servant of God of Isaiah makes his first appearance of the year – pointing to the Mission of Salvation accomplished on Calvary, in the Resurrection and the Spirit launching us as Church!

Today's Gospel is again an epiphany – a showing forth of God being made human in Jesus, calling us to repent and seek forgiveness in the same way as He is going. This was a source of embarrassment to the early Christians; - Jesus was no sinner - underlining the truly dreadful fate which awaited Jesus in such a humiliating way, because of His love for us. So Jesus, however, shows His solidarity to us and starts His Mission for us!

Our lives as baptised Christians can and should be challenging! We remember St Damien, who went voluntarily to Molokai to live with the lepers – segregated from everybody else. At first he was taking precautions and keeping a certain distance – but he gradually realised that for his call to succeed, he would need to gain their trust and be close to them – so catching the disease himself! It was what was needed: he was accepted and could now speak on their behalf for proper treatment and to help others to overcome their fears.

Jesus underwent Baptism for us; he is one with us and shows He is identifying with us and our lives. He is on our side!! He became as sinners are today! His Father approves this Mission in the gift of the Holy Spirit to anoint Him with the oil of compassion – with suffering!!! Sinless He is but that did not prevent Him from identifying with us – we are God's precious children, His mission is to bring us from our sinful condition to the fullness of what that means. Jesus shows His love for us – but He also shows what we have to do if we want to help those who are down.

Baptism is not over and done with the day we were taken to the font! We are baptised by all that happens to us in life. We are baptised by hardship; in its turbulent waters we are purified of all that is false and useless. We are baptised by suffering; in its murky waters we grow in humility and com-compassion. We are baptised by joy; in its gurgling waters we experience the goodness of life. We are baptised by love: in its singing waters we blossom like flowers in the sun. Baptism is like the planting of a seed. It will take a lifetime for this seed to grow and ripen! Such is our Journey of life – such is our journey of faith! It is together that we do this – that is the sure means of our ultimate gift of creative perseverance, to rise to the fullness of divine life at the end of time, through the threshold of death, the gateway to it!



Fr Jean-Marie says:

Baptism of the Lord 2014

Theme: Baptism is the door of faith and of Christian life.

We celebrate today the baptism of the Lord which marks the beginning of his mission of evangelization. On this day we remember how God the Father revealed to the world that Jesus was his beloved Son as the gospel tells us. St Matthew shows how the Father witnesses to his own Son and says that He is the Chosen One, in fulfilment of the text from Isaiah in the first reading.

We remember the day when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove to strengthen and guide him in his mission. St Peter tells us that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and that he is the Lord of all people.

Today I would like to share with you some thoughts of Pope Francis on baptism in our creed. In his catechesis on the Creed, Pope Francis says: In the Creed, through which every Sunday we make our profession of faith, we affirm: "I believe in one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins." It is, he goes on, the only explicit reference to a Sacrament within the Creed. Baptism, he says, is the "door" of faith and of the Christian life. The Risen Jesus left this task to the Apostles: "Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved". Thus, Francis says, the mission of the Church is to evangelize and to remit sins through the sacrament of baptism.

In a certain sense, he goes on, Baptism is the **identification card of the children of God, their certificate of birth**; it is the birth certificate of the Church. People, he says, know the day they were born and celebrate your birthday. But very few can remember the date of their Baptism. The day we were baptized is our second birthday. The first birthday is when we were born into life and the second birthday is when we were born into the Church. The Pope invites us to look for the day we were born into the Church and thank the Lord, because on the day of our Baptism the doors of the Church were opened to us.

At the same time, Pope Francis continues, Baptism is linked to our faith in the remission of sins. The Sacrament of Penance or Confession, he says, is like a "second Baptism," which consolidates and renews our first baptism. In this sense, he says, the day of our Baptism is the point of departure on a journey of conversion that lasts our whole life and which is continually sustained by the Sacrament of Penance. Whenever we go to confession of our sins, the Pope says, we are asking forgiveness of Jesus, but we also go to renew our Baptism with this forgiveness. Thus, every Confession is like a celebration of our Baptismal day. Confession is not being seated in a torture room, rather it is a feast. Confession is for the baptized! To keep clean the white garment of our Christian dignity!