

Baptism of the Lord (C)

13th January 2019

'The gift of Baptism; its completion in Confirmation'

Is 40: "Here is your God" Ps 103: You send forth Your Spirit ...
Titus 2-3: it was for no reason except His own compassion that He saved us
Lk 3:15-16, 21-22: "someone is coming. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"

We're keeping this final feast of the Christmas season — the Baptism of the Lord — in several significant ways. First, we had the reminder of our own Baptism in the Sprinkling of Water at the start of Mass. Then, shortly, we'll have the Rite of Commitment for Confirmation candidates as they embark on the 2nd half of their course in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation after Easter. Also, later, after Holy Communion, we'll have a brief address in connection with our retiring collection for the SPUC ('Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child') who support those who are in crisis pregnancies, and who defend the basic right of each and every unborn child to life. In all these ways, we celebrate that a human life given by God at conception is a gift that He wishes to bless and sanctify, most especially through His great gifts of the Holy Spirit in Baptism & Confirmation.

When Our Lord Jesus comes to His Baptism at the

River Jordan, it's an event principally to benefit us, as He changes the *sign* of water (John's baptism) into the true *sacrament* of His own baptism ("with the Holy Spirit and fire"). It's *this* Baptism in the Spirit, and Confirmation in the divine Fire that we receive as His people in the Sacraments of the Church. So, as we end our Christmas season and embark on these weeks of 'Ordinary Time' till Lent, we know that in God's sight this life ours is not — or should not be — just something ordinary and unremarkable. Our life is blessed in Baptism and Confirmation, and brought to be alive and 'on fire' with the Spirit.

Let's encourage, then, with prayer and affection, our 40 young people who are asking for the Lord's sacred anointing of Confirmation this year. It is the Lord's intention and expectation that His people rejoice in the spiritual gifts that He graciously gives us, gifts that allow us to be holy, moral, peace-loving and generous people, not self-seeking, introverted and godless. Imagine ourselves at that River Jordan as Jesus comes, and let's see the wonders of the Spirit descending from on high, and the voice of the

Father declaring that Jesus is truly the Son of God. Our response to these extraordinary revelations would surely be to want nothing other than His holy company, to follow Him, and to receive all that He has to give. Baptism and Confirmation is a real and substantial sharing in Jesus's risen life, a life that can lead to eternity, and we should all make sure that we prepare for and seek Baptism and Confirmation in order to live in the Spirit, as Jesus wants. This means, of course, that those who have never been Baptized and Confirmed as children or teenagers should most certainly request it. Of course, adequate preparation is necessary, to be living appropriately for the reception of the saving sacraments, but this should put no-one off! As always, I recommend that you come to speak to me if you have not been Baptized and Confirmed. As you listen in a moment to the teenagers making their promise of commitment for Confirmation, apply those same commitments to your own lives. Those of you already confirmed, ask for a real strengthening of the gifts of the Lord; and those of you not yet Confirmed, ask the Lord

Jesus to stir up His Spirit in your life, and give you the desire to request the great outpouring of spiritual gifts in Confirmation!