

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

After the Lord was baptised, the heavens
were opened,
and the Spirit descended upon him like a
dove,
and the voice of the Father thundered:
This is my beloved Son, with whom I am
well pleased.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive
our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who, when Christ had been baptised in the
River Jordan
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,
grant that your children by adoption,
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,
may always be well pleasing to you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Is 42:1-4, 6-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
Thus says the Lord:
Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have endowed him with my spirit
that he may bring true justice to the nations.
He does not cry out or shout aloud,
or make his voice heard in the streets.
He does not break the crushed reed,
nor quench the wavering flame.
Faithfully he brings true justice;
he will neither waver, nor be crushed
until true justice is established on earth,
for the islands are awaiting his law.
I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause
of right;
I have taken you by the hand and formed
you;
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.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

RESP. PSALM

Ps 28

Response:

The Lord will bless his people with peace.

1. O give the Lord you sons of God,
give the Lord glory and power;
give the Lord the glory of his name.
Adore the Lord in his holy court. (R.)
2. The Lord's voice resounding on the
waters,
the Lord on the immensity of waters;
the voice of the Lord, full of power,
the voice of the Lord, full of splendour.
(R.)
3. The God of glory thunders.
In his temple they all cry: "Glory!"
The Lord sat enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits as king for ever. (R.)

SECOND READING

Ac 10:34-38

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household:
"The truth I have now come to
realise," he said "is that God does not have
favourites, but that anybody of
any nationality who fears God and does what
is right is acceptable to him.
"It is true, God sent his word to the people of
Israel, and it was to them
that the good news of peace was brought by
Jesus Christ - but Jesus Christ
is Lord of all men. You must have heard
about the recent happenings in
Judea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he
began in Galilee, after John had
been preaching baptism. God had anointed
him with the Holy Spirit and with
power, and because God was with him, Jesus
went about doing good and curing
all who had fallen into the power of the
devil."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION****Alleluia, alleluia!**

**The heavens opened and the Father's voice
resounded:
"This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him."
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL

Mt 3:13-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.
Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be
baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him.
"It is I who need baptism from you," he said
"and yet you come to me!" But Jesus replied,
"Leave it like this for the time being; it is
fitting that we should, in this way, do all that
righteousness demands." At this, John gave
in to him.
As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up
from the water, and suddenly the heavens
opened and he saw the Spirit of God
descending like a dove and coming down on
him. And a voice spoke from heaven, "This
is my son, the Beloved; my favour rests on
him."
The Gospel of the Lord.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of
the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the offerings
we have brought to honour the revealing of
your beloved Son,
so that the oblation of your faithful
may be transformed into the sacrifice of him
who willed in his compassion
to wash away the sins of the world.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Behold the One of whom John said:
I have seen and testified that this is the Son
of God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished with these sacred gifts,
we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord,
that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten
Son,
we may be your children in name and in
truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



A Victorian stained glass window depicting John the Baptist pouring holy water on the head of Jesus Christ.

We're all in this together! This noble sentiment is capable of provoking a cynical and weary reaction from those who feel that it is being uttered by people who have no idea about how the vast majority of citizens actually live.

But that is the message which Jesus wants to convey through receiving baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. Those who accept John's call to repentance demonstrate this by being baptised. Repentance involves a firm purpose of amendment: it is not enough simply to be sorry for past sin or misdemeanours – the person is also resolving to live a life in conformity with the preaching she or he has accepted. In this sense, Jesus is identifying himself with all those who have accepted John's call and wish to live as good a life as they possibly can. Jesus is not admitting sin: he is submitting to the word of God as conveyed by the prophet.

This is really what the mystery we call the Incarnation is all about. Jesus is a true human being. He is not exempt from the trials which we all experience. Throughout his ministry he has to resist the temptation to be other than God wants him to be, to take shortcuts which might seem to achieve his purpose but which would in fact ruin the plan of the Lord. We might think that Jesus was protected or exempted from the natural emotions which are part of our nature because of his divine nature, but this was not the case. He did not just seem to be a human being, he is one through and through. In this scene we see Jesus standing alongside all those who want to live a proper human life under God's word and will have to struggle to do so.

A caricature of the sacrament of Reconciliation, certainly in the days of very frequent confession, said that it was just a matter of wiping the slate clean so that the person could start doing the same thing all over again. It is true that familiarity can breed, if not contempt, a forgetting of the real purpose of the sacrament, which is to examine our lives and make a sincere effort to live better with the help of God's grace. A thoughtful celebration of the sacrament, especially in preparation for the great feasts of the Church and in the company of others where we do feel that we're all in this together is something which many people find helpful and do appreciate. ■

REFLECT

Some people say that people today do not go to confession because they have lost their sense of sin. It may be true that Catholics today may not feel as burdened by guilt as they did in the past, but that is not the same thing. Anyone who takes their faith, that is their relationship with God, seriously is well aware that they are not the person they would like to be. The most common word for sin in the New Testament means falling short of the ideal: it does not refer to outright rebellion. The way in which people respond to communal services of reconciliation shows that a sense of falling short in the Christian life is present, but the traditional form of dealing with it is no longer meeting many people's needs. ■

SAY

This is my Son, the Beloved: my favour rests on him.

LEARN

A story which causes embarrassment is more likely to be historically accurate. John baptising Jesus suggests that John is more important.

Matthew uses this incident to show that Jesus is prepared to do whatever a sincere Jew would do and so identify himself with such people.

The baptism of John is the outward sign of an inner conversion which involves a change of life.

In Christian baptism the person enters into the life of the Risen Christ and becomes a member of the Church, the community of disciples.

DO

Make the sign of the cross with holy water: it is a reminder of your own baptism.

