

Scripture*Second Sunday of Advent**Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12*

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the precursor of the New Testament. His desert lifestyle makes him the perfect model for the eremitic way of life. As he was to be the dividing line between the Old and New Testament, his form of baptism was also the dividing line between the Jewish ceremonial bath known as a "mikvah" and Christ's ordination of the Sacrament of Baptism. It has the characteristics of the Jewish ceremonial bath as well as a quasi rebirth. The acceptance of John's form of baptism was an admission that the Kingdom of God was indeed at hand along with a willingness to remedy past faults, thus earning God's grace. John was certainly the poster boy for fire and brimstone preaching as evidenced by his words to the Pharisees and Sadducees. John's sanctity, life of mortification and preaching must have had a tremendous impact among the people, hence explaining their willingness to receive his baptism. In our modern day, the example of John the Baptist screams at us daring us to be different, to be counter-cultural, and to follow Christ in a radical way. John warns the Pharisees and Sadducees that they can't hide behind having Abraham as a father. Using that same argument, let us reflect on our own lives. Can we indict ourselves for not being fully Christian? The Baptizer might say to us today: "Don't tell me you're a Christian because you go to church once a week!" Christianity is not about fulfilling obligations. Christianity is a way of life; and when considering the conditions of our modern day world, Christianity is a radical way of life. John continues by saying that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from the stones. In the old law, stones were an instrument of death. Our Savior's instrument of death was the Cross; and from his death God raised up children he would call his very own. John proclaims his baptism for repentance but there will be One Who will come after him who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Here John intimates about the Divinity of Jesus. Interesting also is that this is exactly what happened at Pentecost reminding us that among other things John was indeed a prophet. John the Baptist also states that he is not worthy to carry the sandals of Jesus. This statement would have been very understandable to the people of his day because it was customary for a slave to carry a change of sandals for his master. Therefore, John, in complete humility proclaims his unworthiness to even be a slave for Jesus Christ. In a way, like John the Baptist, we are called to be precursors ourselves. We are the children of God set apart to proclaim the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ by the example of our lives; helping each other by word and deed, heralding Jesus as the Way and only Way to eternal salvation - a gift we are sent to proclaim while at the same time being fully aware of our unworthiness to be recipients of it.

Saints Speak

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself. It was not prudent, when the divinity of the Father had not yet been confessed, to proclaim the Son openly and, when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly. . . . By advancing and progressing "from glory to glory," the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays. St. Gregory of Nazianzus

Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory. St. Basil

Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted. . . . In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God. . . . For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace. St. Iraneaus



From the Catechism...

683 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us. By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son.

684 Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to "know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ." But the Spirit is the last of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed.

685 To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son: "with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified." For this reason, the divine mystery of the Holy Spirit was already treated in the context of Trinitarian "theology." Here, however, we have to do with the Holy Spirit only in the divine "economy."

686 The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation. But in these "end times," ushered in by the Son's redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person. Now can this divine plan, accomplished in Christ, the firstborn and head of the new creation, be embodied in mankind by the outpouring of the Spirit: as the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

687 "No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." Now God's Spirit, who reveals God, makes known to us Christ, his Word, his living Utterance, but the Spirit does not speak of himself. The Spirit who "has spoken through the prophets" makes us hear the Father's Word, but we do not hear the Spirit himself. We know him only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. The Spirit of truth who "unveils" Christ to us "will not speak on his own." Such properly divine self-effacement explains why "the world cannot receive [him], because it neither sees him nor knows him," while those who believe in Christ know the Spirit because he dwells with them

702 From the beginning until "the fullness of time," the joint mission of the Father's Word and Spirit remains *hidden*, but it is at work. God's Spirit prepares for the time of the Messiah. Neither is fully revealed but both are already promised, to be watched for and welcomed at their manifestation. So, for this reason, when the Church reads the Old Testament, she searches there for what the Spirit, "who has spoken through the prophets," wants to tell us about Christ.

728 Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully, until he himself has been glorified through his Death and Resurrection. Nevertheless, little by little he alludes to him even in his teaching of the multitudes, as when he reveals that his own flesh will be food for the life of the world. He also alludes to the Spirit in speaking to Nicodemus, to the Samaritan woman, and to those who take part in the feast of Tabernacles. To his disciples he speaks openly of the Spirit in connection with prayer¹¹⁴ and with the witness they will have to bear.

729 Only when the hour has arrived for his glorification does Jesus *promise* the coming of the Holy Spirit, since his Death and Resurrection will fulfill the promise made to the fathers. The Spirit of truth, the other Paraclete, will be given by the Father in answer to Jesus' prayer; he will be sent by the Father in Jesus' name; and Jesus will send him from the Father's side, since he comes from the Father. The Holy Spirit will come and we shall know him; he



will be with us for ever; he will remain with us. The Spirit will teach us everything, remind us of all that Christ said to us and bear witness to him. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and will glorify Christ. He will prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

731 On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance.

732 On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed. Since that day, the Kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him: in the humility of the flesh and in faith, they already share in the communion of the Holy Trinity. By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the "last days," the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated.

737 The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *prepares* men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit *manifests* the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to *bring them into communion* with God, that they may "bear much fruit."

739 Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal, and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body.

Word Wise

Penetecost

Literally means "the fiftieth day." This was the name of a Jewish festival occurring the fiftieth day after Passover. In the Catholic Church, it is the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the fiftieth day of Easter, seven Sundays after Easter is celebrated. It is considered the birthday of the Church, since from that day forward the apostles carried the message of the Gospel to the entire world, underscoring the missionary work that the Holy Spirit enables us to perform.

Charism

This simply means gift in Greek. The term is used to refer to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Christians. A charism was, in the words of Paul, a gift for the common good given by the Spirit "as the Spirit chooses." 1 Cor 12:7, 11. The charisms include prophecy, healing, administration, preaching, teaching, generosity and, most importantly, love. A call from the Church for active involvement in ministries is a call for each of us to discern and share our charisms.

Evangelization

Refers to acts by which believers call others to hear and assent to the "good news" of the Gospel. Evangelization is not limited to an effort to bring new members into the Church or to welcome those who have, for whatever reason, turned away from the Church. It is equally important to evangelize believers and active Church members as well.



Mission

A mission is something that the Church does to further the Kingdom of God in this world. It refers to an effort to announce the gospel, to evangelize, in one's own country, as well as in foreign lands. Mission also refers to new churches in formation, such as the Waugh Chapel Mission Community that preceded the Church of the Holy Apostles. Finally, mission can refer to a program of spiritual renewal within a parish, often of several days duration.

Trinity

The way we speak of, or conceptualize God, within the Catholic faith, and most Christian denominations. Specifically, God is three persons but a single unity. The simple formulation is that we are saved by the Father through His Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Inspiration

When referring to Scripture, "inspiration" is the belief that the Scriptures, although written by human hand, are through the work of the Holy Spirit in reality the "Word of God." See 2 Timothy 3:16-17. In the Gospels, Jesus explains that David, for example, wrote the Psalms by the power of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament makes several references to the origin of the Old Testament scriptures as inspired, but not to itself. It was the early Church that spoke of inspiration of the New Testament as well. The term is not limited to the origin of the Scriptures, but refers also to their effect as well when we listen to or read the Bible, which gives the statement after the readings at Mass – "The Word of the Lord" or "The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" – a double meaning.

Use the following space to list questions or thoughts from reflecting on the material in these Companion Notes that you would like to share when the group meets again.

Remember to read the scriptures for next week's sharing --- the 3rd Sunday of Advent, Year A on p. 8 of your Catechumen's Companion.