

Baptism of Jesus

January 9, 2022

Prayer for Reading 1

We cry in the wilderness. The roads we walk are rugged and rough: virus, racism and climate potholes, only deep valleys and steep mountains. Jesus, be a path for us. As for all nations, open our straying eyes; release prisoners to walk free; deliver those who live in oppression. Let the grace you bestow make us mercy to one another. Gather us as lambs in your arms.

Reading I: [Is 42:1-4, 6-7](#)

Thus says the LORD: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street, a bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10](#)

R. (11b) The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Give to the LORD, you sons of God, give to the LORD glory and praise,
Give to the LORD the glory due his name; adore the LORD in holy attire.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters, the LORD, over vast waters.

The voice of the LORD is mighty; the voice of the LORD is majestic.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

The God of glory thunders, and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

The LORD is enthroned above the flood; the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Questions for Reading 1

1. God says, “here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased.” Then a voice came from heaven, saying to Jesus, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. What are the implications?
2. Wastelands, deserts, rugged land and rough country ([Isaiah 40](#)). Could these words describe our world today? Covid? Election politics? Racism? Climate crisis? Does this reading suggest that there is help in fixing these or do you have to do it all yourself?

Prayer for Reading 2

Lord, rain down your Spirit upon us: over our shoulders, heads, hands, feet. Drench our hearts. Your lavish love gives us life beyond telling. Thank you.

Reading II: [Acts 10:34-38](#)

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Questions for Reading 2

1. In the reading from Acts, Peter is quoted as saying this about Jesus: “He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil.” Compare this with Isaiah in the [First Reading](#): “I formed you...to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.”
- 2 Did we do anything to earn salvation? Why does God give it to us? What does St. Paul in his letter to Titus say about the extravagance of God’s gift to us?

Prayer for Gospel

Jesus, sinless, you stood among us, awaiting the sacrament like everybody else, as though you were a sinner who needs to be made clean. But the Father said in a loud voice: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” Oh Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you stand with us, sinful as we are, forming us as beloved daughters and sons. Baptism shows your light in us for all the world. Let it be.

Gospel: [Lk 3:15-16, 21-22](#)

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Questions for Gospel

1. John the Baptist was the middleman. He pointed back to Isaiah and forward to Jesus, connecting the whole plan. What or who are the “middlemen or women” who connect you with God? Can you serve as a middle-one?

2. Because we were baptized and are children of God, Pope Francis says we can call God Daddy. What does he say is our vocation as children of God?

Baptism, therefore, is not merely an external rite. Those who receive it are transformed deep within, in their inmost being, and possess new life, which is precisely what allows them to turn to God and call on him with the name of “Abba,” that is, “daddy.” “Father”? No: “daddy.” (cf. [Gal 4:6](#))

Every distinction becomes secondary to the dignity of being children of God, who, through his love, creates a real and substantial equality. Everyone, through Christ’s redemption and the baptism we have received, we are all equal: children of God. Equal. ...

And one of the apostles, in the Letter of James, says this: “Be aware about differences, because it is not right that when someone enters the assembly (that is, the Mass) wearing a gold ring and

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well-dressed, ‘Ah, come up here, up here!’ and you give him one of the front seats. Then, if someone else enters, ... you see he is poor, poor, poor, “Oh, yeah, you can go over there in the back.” ... No, we are equal! Rather, our vocation is that of making concrete and evident the call to unity of the entire human race (cf Conc. Ecum. Vat. II, Cost. [Lumen gentium](#), 1).

[Pope Francis: Which of you knows the exact date of your baptism?](#) Sept. 8, 2021

In Exile

by Ron Rolheiser

Living in the Holy Spirit

Few expressions summarize so succinctly what is asked of us as Christians as does the expression, “to live in the Spirit.”

Too often, however, this phrase is used in a way that is too pious, too over-charged with charismatic fervor, or too theologically abstract to have much meaning for ordinary people. It may well summarize Christian life, but it can also be little more than a very vague platitude. What does it mean “to live in the Spirit?”

St. Paul, in attempting to specify this, is anything but piously deluded or theologically abstract. Rather he speaks with a clarity that leaves almost no room for vagueness or false sentiment. He begins by a certain *Via Negativa*, telling us that, if in our lives there is “lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factionalism, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like,” then we are not living in the spirit, pure and simple. Conversely, we are living in the spirit when, in our lives, there is “charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity.” ([Galatians 5:19-22](#))

This is a valuable insight because, if we take Paul’s words seriously, we can never delude ourselves into identifying true life in the Spirit with what it is so often confused with, namely, false piety and (in pious circles) over-privatized sentiment and confrontation out of hurt, paranoia, and narrow loyalties (in both liberal and conservative circles). When the fruits of the Spirit are absent, regardless of how spiritually confident and self-righteous we might feel or how right our cause might seem, then the Spirit too is absent.

We must be clear about this.

The Spirit is present only when charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity are deeply in our lives—and permeate the air around us.

The Holy Spirit, as classically defined in theology, is “the love between the God and Christ, the Father and the Son.” It is in meditating on this concept that we come to some understanding of what it means to live in the Spirit. Let me try to elaborate on this by using the image of romantic love in its peak fervor.

Imagine a man and a woman who are deeply, passionately, and completely in love. What will characterize their relationship? Constant giving and receiving, resulting in an ever deeper

relationship and an ever intensifying gratitude—which will leave them both, daily, feeling ever more mellow, joyful, peaceful, mild, patient, chaste, and wanting to reach out and share with others what is so quickening in their own lives.

Moreover, their love for each other will create, around them, an ambience, a climate, an atmosphere of charity, joy, peace, patience, mildness, and chastity. The movement of giving-and-receiving-in-gratitude between them will create a warm hearth where others will spontaneously come to seek warmth in a world which offers too little peace, patience, joy, and the like.

Such a relationship can be a modest indicator for what happens in the Trinity, of how the Father and the Son generate the Spirit, and what results from this generation.

The Father constantly creates and gives life.

The Son receives life from the Father and gives it back in gratitude.

This then makes it possible for the Father to give even more to the Son (as is true in all relationships wherein gift is received lovingly).

As this flow of life, this giving and receiving, goes on, gratitude intensifies and an energy, a spirit, the Holy Spirit, is created.

This Spirit, since it is generated by gratitude, naturally is a Spirit of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, and chastity. It is then also a spirit that is naturally incompatible with idolatry, adultery, violence, gossip, factionalism, jealousy, rage, and infidelity.

When we meditate on how the Holy Spirit is generated, we are under less illusion as to what it means to live in the Spirit. To believe that we are living in the Spirit when our lives are not permeated by gratitude, and radiating it, is to be dangerously deluded. We must be clear about this, lest, as poet William Stafford puts it: “Following the wrong God home, we may both miss our star.”

<http://liturgy.slu.edu/index.html>

(main site from which the Bible study is composed)