

Reflection on the Baptism of the Lord from Sean

When we consider that Our Saviour Jesus Christ is God in the flesh we might wonder why it was that he was baptised. St Paul tells us that Christ was like us in all things but sin, so it is clear that in fact Jesus didn't have to be baptised, at least not in the way you and I were.

Just before the passage we read in today's Gospel, John the Baptist *'proclaims a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.'* ¹Repentance is as much about turning back to God as turning away from sin. This helps us to see what it means for Jesus, who is without sin, to undergo baptism. He partakes of this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins even though he doesn't need it. It's for this reason we can see how pleased his Father is. In fact, we might see in this single act all those other acts, which follow later in the Gospel, whereby Jesus reaches out to sinners and calls them to a change of mind and heart. Sin brings about division. It isolates and it wounds. But Jesus, because he is without sin, seeks out the sinner. He draws us to him, forgives our sins and heals us.

With his baptism, Jesus begins his mission and through it we who read the Gospel can begin to see why Jesus came, so that we might be saved from sin. Jesus' entry into the waters of the River Jordan is our entry into the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The one, whom the Father calls *'my beloved Son'*² would have us become in him sons and daughters of the Father.

It's important to remember that the baptism of Jesus is entirely different to those whom John was baptising around this time. Jesus is without sin and therefore could not confess sin or repent. He in fact does far more. As the Son he perfectly obeys the Father. When we overhear the voice of the Father declare to Jesus, *You are my son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you*, two things are revealed. Firstly, Jesus is shown as the beloved Son of the Father and secondly we see his perfect obedience.

St Mark tells us that as Jesus arose from the waters, immediately the heavens opened and the Spirit descended. This is a significant moment, because we see the glory of the resurrection prefigured, and not just Jesus' resurrection, but ours too. The life he gives us now, is but the foretaste of the life of the world to come.

¹ Mk 1: 4

² Mk 1: 11