

Sunday, 13 Jan 2019: The Baptism of the Lord - Year C

First Reading - Is 42:1-4. 6-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Here is my servant, my chosen one in whom I am well pleased.

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.

or

Ad libitum for Year C

Is 40:1-5. 9-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it.

'Console my people, console them'
says your God.

'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem
and call to her

that her time of service is ended,

that her sin is atoned for,

that she has received from the hand of the Lord
double punishment for all her crimes.'

A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness
a way for the Lord.

Make a straight highway for our God
across the desert.

Let every valley be filled in,

every mountain and hill be laid low,

let every cliff become a plain,

and the ridges a valley;

then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed

and all mankind shall see it;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’
Go up on a high mountain,
joyful messenger to Zion.
Shout with a loud voice,
joyful messenger to Jerusalem.
Shout without fear,
say to the towns of Judah,
‘Here is your God.’
Here is the Lord coming with power,
his arm subduing all things to him.
The prize of his victory is with him,
his trophies all go before him.
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms,
holding them against his breast
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 28:1-4. 9-10. R. v.11

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

Second Reading -Acts 10:34-38

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power.

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 Judaea; 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.’

or

Ad libitum for Year C

Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to Titus

God’s grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

When the kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind were revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously

poured over us through Jesus Christ our saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life.

Gospel Acclamation

See Mk 9:8

Alleluia, alleluia!

The heavens were opened and the Father's voice was heard:

this is my beloved Son, hear him.

Alleluia!

or

Ad libitum for Year C

See Lk 3:16

Alleluia, alleluia!

John said: He who is to come is mightier than I;

he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Alleluia!

Gospel - Lk 3:15-16. 21-22

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

When Jesus had been baptised and had been praying, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit came upon him.

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

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Reflection on the Gospel-The Baptism of Jesus Year C (Luke 3:15-16, 21-22)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Today's celebration of the baptism of Jesus marks the end of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. The liturgy of the Christmas season invited us to reflect on and to experience the various comings of Christ in our world. It invited us to open ourselves to the action of God's grace at work in our encounters with the living Christ.

The readings from Luke's gospel led us from the story of the birth of Jesus to the story of his personal decision at age twelve to remain in God's house, the Jerusalem Temple, listening to the teachers of the Law and astonishing them with his answers to their questions.

Now, as an adult and along with "all the people", Jesus receives John's water baptism. The crowds are wondering if John the Baptist is the Christ/Messiah, God's anointed one. John points the people away from himself and towards Jesus who "will baptise ...with the Holy Spirit and fire". Did Jesus also engage in a ministry of baptising the people "for the forgiveness of sins" or is John's reference to Jesus' activity of baptising with the Holy Spirit and fire a metaphor for the distinctive features of his future gospel ministry? It could well be both. As already noted in the reflection for the third Sunday of Advent, the three instruments of God's saving and purifying action for the Essene community at Qumran were fire, water and "a holy Spirit". In Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, the presence of the Holy Spirit is marked by tongues of fire. Fire is a powerful symbol that functions as a threat on the one hand and as a source of energy and light on the other.

The gospel reading tells us that Jesus is God's Chosen One, the Beloved, on whom God's Spirit rests. In light of the first reading from Isaiah 42, the voice of God in the baptism scene commissions Jesus to bring forth justice, sensitively and without fanfare; to be a light to the peoples; to open the eyes of the blind and to set the captives free. Those baptised into Christ through the ages are baptised "with the Holy Spirit and fire" and are called to the same mission as Jesus and the same sensitive approach to that mission. The fire in our hearts sometimes flickers in the face of life's challenges. We are sometimes guilty of crushing "the bruised reed" or extinguishing the flickering flame of hope. As we move into Ordinary Time with its often extraordinary demands, we might think about stirring the embers and fanning the flame of God's love so that justice might prevail in our world and for our planet-justice without violence, if not without pain.