

June 2017

“He went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened”

Mathew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:13-17




Reflection:

The heavens are opened! The Spirit of God descends upon us! This is the Good News of our salvation that we specially celebrate during the season of Easter and Pentecost. Through the death and Resurrection of Jesus, the door to heaven has been opened for us, and we have access to the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit allows us out to call out to Him as “Abba! Father!”

Jesus was baptized in the Jordan in order to institute the Sacrament of Baptism as the permanent means of participation in His death and Resurrection. He died for our sins, and in baptism we join with Him in this very death so as to become completely dead to sin. As St. Paul asks, “How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” Having died with Him, we are to have nothing to do with the works of darkness, but we are given the grace to rise with Him into a new life, a life filled with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is of course no mere human tradition. It is not just an opportunity to make a public profession of faith in the community. In every baptism, it is not man but God who is the primary agent, He “whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire”. Yet, this does not mean that we can simply be passive about our baptism. On the contrary, we must cooperate with the grace of baptism by actively giving ourselves completely to God and to His Kingdom. This is why the Church asks candidates (or parents and godparents) to express their personal commitment to renounce evil and to follow Christ by making certain promises. On Easter and on other occasions we renew these same baptismal promises; we recommit ourselves to living a new life in Christ. As St. Paul writes, “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”. In this way, a baptized person is called to be a radically different person, a “new man”, a privileged member of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people”. He is now a person consecrated for Christian worship.

Every Pentecost, Jesus Youth celebrates its Recommitment Day. This is a special time when we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, offer our lives once again to Christ and His Church by recommitting ourselves to the Jesus Youth lifestyle and spirituality. The call to live as a Jesus Youth is a specific call we experience within the fundamental call of our baptism. This Pentecost will be especially significant, as it marks the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. As we join our Holy Father Pope Francis and all our brothers and sisters in the Renewal to celebrate this Golden Jubilee, let us also pause to reflect on how faithful we have been to the tremendous gift of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit - to be dead to sin and to live a new life in the Spirit. Let us implore the help of Mary, who opened herself fully to the Spirit, as we pray for a renewed commitment to our baptism and to the spirituality of Jesus Youth.

 **Saints Quote:** Faith is the womb that conceives this new life, baptism the rebirth by which it is brought forth into the light of day. The Church is its nurse; her teachings are its milk, the bread from heaven is its food: St. Gregory of Nyssa

 **To Do:** Take this ejaculatory prayer to your heart: “Abba Father, rekindle in me a new love for your Spirit’s ways”



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