

## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

January 11, 2009 Baptism of the Lord (Cycle B)

### Gospel reading Mark 1:7-11



This is what John the Baptist proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

### Brief commentary:

This text narrates the third "manifestation" of the Gospels: the Nativity, the Epiphany, and today the revelation of Jesus' identity in his baptism. John proclaimed a baptism of conversion for the forgiveness of sins. Before John, no Jew had ever been baptized with a baptism of repentance. Such penitential rite was not necessary for the Jews, sons of Abraham, who had already been chosen. The baptism was for the sinners, tax collectors, publicans, prostitutes or anyone from Gentile background who wished to come into the Jewish faith. Mark tells us in a simple way that Jesus came from Nazareth and was also baptized by John. It is at this moment that Jesus hears the statement "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." In the Gospel of Mark, these words are addressed only to Jesus. In contrast to Matthew and Luke, this is a personal experience, and the words of God are not heard by others. Jesus acts as the Beloved Son, and begins his public ministry, not as a triumphant, powerful Messiah, but as the Suffering Servant; his throne will be sacrificial love, not temporal power. The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of a new era guided by the loving action of the Spirit.

#### Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- Through the life-giving baptism with the Holy Spirit, Jesus will create a new people of God.
- The descent of the Spirit on Jesus means anointing him for his ministry.
- God's approval of Jesus is the assurance that Jesus will fulfill his messianic mission of salvation.

### For our shared or personal reflection:

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

1. Do I see in this Gospel a reminder of my own baptism and my election by God to manifest Christ in all I do?
2. By the time we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, our society has forgotten all about Christmas. Let us reflect during this week on the fact that even though the Christmas season ends today, Christmas never ends!

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 151; 422; 444.