



## The Baptism of the Lord Year B Mark 1:7-11

**7 In the course of his preaching John the Baptist said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. 8 I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'**

**9 It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. 10 No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'**

Other readings: Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7 Psalm 28 (29) Acts 10:34-38

The Christmas season concludes with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It is appropriate that this is so, for Jesus comes into the world not to live in obscurity but to perform the mission given him by the Father with the power of the Holy Spirit. His baptism comes at the start of his public life and heralds his ministry.

The account of the work of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Mark is quite brief. He preaches 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins'. John urges people to change their hearts and lives in preparation for the Messiah. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give far fuller accounts of the preaching of the Baptist, and add significantly to the brief account in the Gospel of Mark.

In the passage for this feast John proclaims that the one who is to come will be 'more powerful than I am'. John's preaching attracted crowds of people and had a strong effect on them. When Jesus comes, John implies, he will confront evil in all its forms with the power of the Spirit. This 'more powerful' one will bring a baptism which will have a deeper and more lasting effect, for it will be baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The evangelist does not dwell long on the actual baptism of Jesus, this clear demonstration of his solidarity with all those who need healing and forgiveness. Mark puts the emphasis on the vision Jesus sees and the voice he hears. The baptism story shows Jesus to be the Spirit-filled Servant of God. His mission reflects that of the servant described in those passages in the second part of the Book of Isaiah known as the 'servant songs', one of which is our first reading. Jesus is the beloved Son of God, who will always do what pleases the Father.

*How appropriate is it to conclude the Christmas celebration with the feast of the Baptism of Jesus?*

*What was the purpose of Jesus' baptism by John?*

*We pray for a deeper sense of awe at God's love for all creation, which is displayed at Christmas.*

*We pray that in the coming year we may grow in strength as servants of the Lord.*