

PEDRO ARRUIPE INSTITUTE, RAIA - GOA

REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY LITURGY

10th January 2021 – *The Baptism of the Lord*

IS 42: 1-4, 6-7 | ACTS 10: 34-38 | MK 1: 7-11

Spiritual Track: Fr. Joseph Fernandes SJ

Baptism of Jesus-The turning point in His Life

The film *Gandhi* is a three-hour epic, depicting the life of Mahatma Gandhi in India. In order to lead the oppressed people of India to freedom from British rule, Gandhi adopted non-violent means such as fasting from food, vigils of prayer, peaceful marches, protests and civil disobedience. One of the reasons why Gandhi put on a loincloth and fasted from food, almost to the point of death, was to show solidarity with the Indian people, identifying with them in their physical sufferings. This finally brought independence to India. Jesus' baptism, as described in today's Gospel, was his identification with God's chosen people who became aware of their sinful lives and need for God's forgiveness.

The turning point: His baptism by John was **an especially important event** in the life of Jesus. First, it was a **moment of identification** with us sinners. Sinless, Jesus received the baptism of repentance to identify himself with his people, who realized for the first time that they were sinners. (As given in the anecdotes below, St. Damien, Blessed Mother Teresa, Gandhi, and Mandela identified with the people whom they served). Second, it was a **moment of conviction** about his identity and mission: that He is the Son of God and His mission was to preach the Good News of God's love and salvation and to atone for our sins by becoming the "suffering servant." God the Father's words, "This my beloved Son," taken from Psalm 2:17, reveal Jesus' identity as God's Son, and the words "with whom I am well pleased," from Isaiah 42:1 (referring to the "suffering servant"), pointed to Jesus' mission of atoning for the sins of the world by His suffering and death on the cross. Third, it was a **moment of equipment**. The Holy Spirit equipped Jesus by descending on him in the form of dove, giving him the power of preaching and healing. Fourth, it was a **moment of decision** for Jesus to begin public ministry at the most opportune time after receiving the approval of his Heavenly Father as His *beloved Son*.

The baptism of Jesus reminds us of our identity. It reminds us of who we are and whose we are. By Baptism, we become sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of his Church, heirs of Heaven, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Most of us dipped the fingers of our right hands into the holy water font and blessed ourselves when we came into church. *Why?* This blessing is supposed to remind us of our Baptism. And so when I bless myself with Holy Water, I should be thinking of the fact that I am a child of God; that I have been redeemed by the Cross of Christ; that I have been made a member of God's family, and that I have been washed, forgiven, cleansed, and purified by the Blood of the Lamb. Let us ask Our Lord today to make us faithful to our Baptismal promises. Let us thank Him for the privilege of being joined to His mission of preaching the "Good News" by our transparent Christian lives of love, mercy, service, and forgiveness.

Scriptural Track: Fr. Ronnie D'Souza SJ

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Theme: Are you aware of your calling in life? At the baptism of Jesus His mission was made manifest to Him by the Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit and the Father's voice, "You are My Beloved Son, in you I am well pleased!" This indicates that Jesus was all the time aware of His mission and needed, in His human nature, confirmation. This He was given at His baptism. Everyone has his/her own calling in life. We must respond to it in the framework of our personal capabilities and the circumstances of time and milieu. Serious and mature people understand that only a life of service is a meaningful life. What do I consider my main calling in life and how do I fulfil it? Today's opening prayer enlightens us: "Almighty, eternal God keep us your children born of water and the Spirit, faithful to our calling."

The First Reading is Is. 42/1-4, 6-7. The inspired writer in this reading depicts the ideal servant of God. In his book the author expresses this same theme in four different songs. They could refer to the whole nation of Israel or to a king of the past or to the Messiah (Anointed king). The church in her wisdom aptly applies them to Jesus the Suffering Servant. This is the mission He will be accomplishing.

The Second Reading is Acts 10/34-38. In this passage Peter sees Jesus as in His baptism "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power" and so equipped for the calling of doing good works and healing those who are in the grip of the devil. A similar calling is ours as baptized Christians.

Today's Gospel is St. Mark's narrative of the baptism of Jesus. Accompanying Jesus' baptism is the theophany (manifestation of God). Most of us were baptized as children; now we as growing Christians must continuously be aware of our calling and live up to our vocation.