

Our Baptism is a sharing in the Salvation in Jesus

For past two weeks we have celebrated Jesus as an infant. Now we begin celebrating Jesus as an adult; his first public appearance as an adult, his baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan.

Perhaps we may wonder why Jesus requested John to baptize him. Jesus did not have any sins to repent of and the baptism offered by John the Baptist was for repentance of sins. When sinners went to John at the river Jordan they did so because they acknowledged their sinfulness and their baptism meant turning over to a new life, leaving sin behind. Jesus, although like us in every way, was without sin. That explains why John the Baptist objected to Jesus' request for baptism, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?". Jesus answers him by saying, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." What does this mean?

Sinless Jesus did not have any sins of his own to take down into the river Jordan, therefore it could only have been our sins that he took down into the river Jordan. Naturally no one would understand this at that time but they would realize this later when they understood that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. So Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and his dying on the cross go together; *he did both for our sins*. He took our sins on his shoulders, as he went down into the Jordan and went up on the cross and died.

I think we can find this close connection between the baptism of Jesus and his death on cross in the Scriptures. Especially..

Jesus, foretelling about his Passion, described it as a baptism. "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, *and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!*" (Lk 12:50).

Again, when James and John wanted to sit in glory beside Jesus he spoke about his Passion: Jesus said, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the *baptism with which I am baptized?*”

The Gospel of John tells us that when the Baptist saw Jesus approaching him in the river Jordan he proclaimed, “Behold, the Lamb of God, *who takes away the sin of the world.*” It is interesting that as Jesus appears at the river Jordan, John the Baptist mentions that Jesus takes away the sin of the world.

On the cross, Jesus took our sins on himself and made us righteous. So when Jesus is baptized, he is already accepting his Passion and death.

Just as there is a close link between Jesus’ baptism and his cross there is a close link between *our baptism and Jesus’ cross.* Paul in his letter to the Romans tells us,

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death and were buried with himSo that we too might walk in newness of life? Consequently, our baptism, receives its power from Jesus’ death and resurrection. Our baptism is a sharing in the effects and salvation of Jesus’ death and resurrection, a sharing in the new life in Jesus.

Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan expressed the intention of his whole life right up to dying on the cross for us, taking our sins on himself to save us. *Our baptism also expresses the intention of our whole life up to our death, leaving our sin behind and living with the life of Jesus. Every day is to be a living out of our baptism with that new life of Jesus.* Every day is another opportunity to turn away from sin, and continue following Jesus which we began with our baptism. Amen! (Fr. James Chitteth)