

## CHRIST'S BAPTISM (Christ 3)

During the past few weeks, the whole emphasis of the Liturgy has been on the humanity of Christ. The Readings, all during the Christmas season, told us that Christ was born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. In a word, during the Christmas season, all our attention was focused on the Infant Jesus.

Today, as we commemorate Christ's Baptism, we shift our attention from the Infant Jesus to the mature Christ. Today's Readings describe Mature Christ as Servant of Yahweh our great God, Saviour & My Beloved Son.

Just as it happened to the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the likeness of a dove. A voice from Heaven proclaimed: "You are my Beloved Son; with you I am well pleased".

### Who Is Jesus Of Nazareth?

These Readings would have us ask ourselves: Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Who is this Person who was baptized by John in the River Jordan? When we are answering these questions, we must combine today's Gospel with the Readings we had during the Christmas season.

Christ is the Son of the Virgin Mary. Christ is the Infant, whose Mother wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. Christ is also, as today's Gospel expresses it – the Son in whom the Father is well pleased. These 2 truths about Christ must always go hand in hand and be equally emphasized.

If we emphasize Christ's humanity & neglect his Divinity, then we don't have the picture of Christ that is presented to us in the New Testament. On the other hand, if we emphasize the fact that Christ is the Son of God and downgrade the fact that he is the Son of Mary, we have also a wrong impression of who Christ is.

#### (a). Son of Mary

With the Christmas Readings still fresh in our memories, it is easy for us to realize that Christ is human like the rest of us. Christ was born & grew up like any other child. He worked with his hands: loved with a human heart: felt disappointed, sad & tired. In other words, Christ was just like every one else living in Nazareth. As St. Paul reminds us, Christ was like us in all things but sin.

#### (b). Son of God

The Gospels, especially the Gospel of St. John, tell us that Christ is also the Son of God. Christ himself claimed that he was equal to the Father in all things. He also claimed that He, the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God. St. John starts off his Gospel by saying: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God". In this passage St. John identifies Christ with the Word who, from all eternity, exists with God and who is God. The emphasis in today's Gospel is, not so much on Christ's Baptism, but on the revelation of Him as the Son of God.

At the Last Supper, when Christ was speaking about His Father, Philip asked Him to let them see the Father. To this Christ replied: "Philip .. to have seen me is to have seen the Father". (Jn. 14:19). In these and similar passages, St. John is reminding us that

Christ is the Word of God made Flesh:

Christ is the Son, who was sent by the Father:

Christ is the One, who is equal to the Father in all things.

Thus, the Child whose birthday we celebrated a few short weeks ago is the Son of God, who is equal in all things with the Father.

### Christ Was Also Very Human

Because of the catechesis most of us had growing up, we don't have any problem in accepting the fact that Christ is "the Son of God". We were all brought up in what theologians describe as a "high Christology" -- a Christology which emphasizes the divinity of Christ. What we don't as easily appreciate is that the mature Christ was just as human as any one of us. We all appreciate the humanity of the Infant Jesus but somehow the older Christ becomes the more he seems to lose his humanity.

We more easily associate divinity, miracles & supernatural powers with the mature Christ than we do human feelings & emotions. Even though Christ performed miracles: even though he was Divine, he still remained very human. Christ lived an ordinary life in Nazareth. He was known as the Carpenter's Son. He had human feelings & emotions. He loved with a human heart and enjoyed human company. And we know from his visits to Martha and Mary that he enjoyed a good meal.

What more human picture could we have of Christ than seeing him, standing by the well, tired & thirsty, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. (Jn. 4:7). What more human picture could we have of Christ than seeing him weeping over Jerusalem as he foretold its future destruction.

What more human picture could we have of Christ than seeing Him, in the Garden of Gethsemane, struggling to accept His Father's will that he become a Crucified Messiah. Twice He pleaded: "Abba! Father! take this cup away from me". But then He adds: "Not my will but yours be done". St. Luke tells us that his struggle to accept His Father's will that he become a Suffering Messiah was so intense that his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Like ourselves Christ disliked hypocrisy. He criticized the Scribes & Pharisees, because their prayers, fasting & almsgiving were done to win the approval of others rather than to praise God.

Like ourselves, he liked to be thanked for his favours. We see his disappointment when only one leper returned to thank him for being cured. We also see the human side of Christ when, dying on the Cross, he asked the Beloved disciples to take care of his Mother for Him.

So, when we are answering the question: "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?" we have to give equal emphasis to his humanity and to his divinity.

Christ is the Carpenter of Nazareth. Christ is the friend, who went to visit Martha & Mary when he heard that their brother was ill. Christ is also, as today's Gospel reminds us, the Son in whom the Father is well pleased.

### Conclusion

This morning's Gospel would have us ask ourselves: Who is this Person who was baptized by John in the River Jordan? After asking ourselves : Who is Christ? I feel that we should go a step further and ask: Who is Christ for me?

What influence does my faith in Christ have on the way I lead my life?

We are all Christians. We are all followers of Christ. So the life, example and teaching of Christ does have a big influence on our lives. This morning's Readings would have us ask ourselves:

Does my faith in Christ have as much influence as it should have on the way I live my life, the way I relate to others & my attitude towards material things?

I've asked the question before, but I feel that it is worth repeating: If I was on trial, accused of being a Christian, would there be much evidence against me?

Let us all, & I'm including myself, reflect on this over the week end: If I was on trial, accused of being a Christian, would there be much evidence against me?