Christmas Weekday: January 3rd

Gospel text (*Jn* 1:29-34): John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.” John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

“Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Fr. Higinio Rafael ROSOLEN IVE
(Cobourg, Ontario, Canada)

Today, Saint John the Baptist bears witness to the Baptism of Jesus. Pope Francis reminded us that "Baptism is the Sacrament on which our very faith is founded and which grafts us as a living member onto Christ and his Church"; and he added: "It is not a formality! It is an act that touches the depths of our existence. A baptized child and an unbaptized child are not the same. A person who is baptized and a person who is not baptized are not the same. We, by Baptism, are immersed in that inexhaustible source of life which is the death of Jesus, the greatest act of love in all of history; and thanks to this love we can live a new life, no longer at the mercy of evil, of sin and of death, but in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters."

We have heard the two main effects of Baptism as taught in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (n. 1262-1266):

1st "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). One effect of Baptism is the purification of sins, meaning all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all the penalties of sin.

2nd "The Spirit come down," "baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (Jn 1:34): Baptism makes us become "a new creation," adopted children of God and partakers of the divine nature, members of Christ, co-heirs with Him, and temples of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Trinity —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— gives us sanctifying grace, which enables us to believe in

God, to hope in Him, and to love Him; to live and act under the influence of the Holy Spirit through His gifts; to grow in goodness through moral virtues.

Let us ask, as Pope Francis exhorts us, to "reawaken the memory of our Baptism… to live out our Baptism every day as the present reality of our lives."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Let us celebrate the feast day, on which the great and eternal Day came into this brief and temporal day of ours. He it is who was made for us redemption.” (Saint Augustine)

- “The Earth is restored to good order by virtue of the fact that it is opened up to God, it obtains its true light anew. The song of the angels is an expression of joy over the fact that Heaven and Earth are once more united to God.” (Benedict XVI)

- “After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist (…) pointed Jesus out as the ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn 1:29). By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who (…) bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover (Ex 12:3-14). Christ's whole life expresses his mission: ‘to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mk 10:45).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 608)

Other comments

“I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Fr. Antoni ORIOL i Tataret
(Vic, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, this fragment of Saint John's Gospel shows a characteristic testimonial dimension. A witness is somebody who declares somebody else's identity. John the Baptist is introduced as the prophet par excellence who states Jesus' centrality. Let's look at it from different perspectives.

First of all, he affirms it as a seer who exhorts: “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’”. (Jn 1:29). Later on, he says: “He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’” (Jn 1:30). He then confirms it because he is very aware of the mission he has been assigned: “I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.” (Jn 1:31). And finally, as the prophet that he is, he states: “I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will

baptize with the holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God." (Jn 1:33-34).

Given this testimony, which has kept the very same energy within the Church it had 2,000 years ago, we should ask ourselves: Do I contemplate Jesus as the One who is going to save me from moral evil in a laicized society which denies sin? Do I believe in Him as the One who has always existed, before John, before the world was created as opposed to the current belief that places Him as simply an extraordinary religious figure? In a world with a thousand opinions and ideologies, do I accept Jesus as the One that makes my life something true? In the middle of a civilization which disregards faith, do I adore Jesus as the One in whom the Spirit of God lies?

And one last question: Is my "yes" to Jesus so absolute that I can say to the people I know: "I can tell you that Jesus is the Son of God!", like John did?