The Baptism of the Lord (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 3:13-17): Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

"Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him"

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Today, we contemplate the Messiah —the Anointed— by the river Jordan "to be baptized by him" (Mt 3:13). And we can see Jesus Christ foreshadowed by the visible physical occurrence of the Holy Spirit and, through audible words, by the Father, who proclaims of Jesus the following "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17). Here, we have a marvelous motive and, at the same time, an encouraging incentive to live a life: to be beloved and chosen by the Heavenly Father. To enthrall the Father!

Somehow, we already request it in the collect prayer of today's mass: "Almighty and eternal God… turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ". God, who is infinitely good, "loves us well" all the time. But, do we allow him to? Are we worthy of His divine benevolence? do we correspond to this benevolence?

To deserve such divine benevolence and complacence, Christ has provided the waters with a regenerating and purifying strength, so that, when baptized, we truly become sons of God. Saint Maximus of Turin said: "Maybe someone will wonder: 'why did He want to be baptized, if He is Holy? Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ was baptized not to be made holy by the waters, but to make holy the waters'."

All this places us —undeservedly— in a connatural level with divinity. But this first regeneration does not suffice: we need to experience the Baptism once more through a kind of continuous "second baptism", which is our spiritual rebirth. Parallel to the Rosary's first Mystery of Light —Christ's Baptism in the Jordan river— we must contemplate Mary's example in the fourth Joyful Mystery: Purity of Heart. She,

Immaculate, and a pure virgin, is quite willing to submit herself to the purification process. We crave for the simplicity, sincerity and humility that allow us to constantly live our purification as a sort of “second baptism”.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Christ appeared in the world, and, bringing beauty out of disarray, gave it luster and joy. He bore the world's sins and crushed the world's enemy. He sanctified the fountains of waters and enlightened the minds of men.” (Saint Proclus of Constantinople)

- “Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus told us to go into all the world to baptize. And from that day forward up until today, this has been an uninterrupted chain: they baptized their children, and their children their own, and those children... And also today this chain continues.” (Francis)

- “Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan. John preaches ‘a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins’ (...). ‘Then Jesus appears’ (...) and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, ‘This is my beloved Son’ (Mt 3,13:17) This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 535)