

Baptism



Joahim Patiner, *Baptism of Christ*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1480-1524

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' Luke 3:15-16,21-22



Describe what you can see, what is actually happening.

Jesus is looking directly at you in this painting. Ask him what he is saying to you today.

What sort of relationship does Jesus want to have with you?

How does this painting help me reflect on the Sacrament of Baptism?

If Baptism unites me to God, how can I know him, love him and imitate him everyday?

Our artist, Joachim Patinir, lived and worked in Antwerp. From this painting from circa 1521, we can see that he was a unique and influential forerunner of modern landscape painting. It is one of the few surviving paintings that Patinir signed. On the central vertical axis we see God the Father appearing amongst the clouds holding a globe, sending down the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Then we have the hand of John the Baptist directly above Jesus, who is looking straight at us. The river He is standing in opens up wide, into the world. On the left side we see Jesus appearing from the Sea of Galilee walking towards the multitude, tying our painting to yesterday's reading of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

The baby of the manger has grown into full adulthood, ready for His mission. Jesus is standing in the river where on that day His great ministry began, continuing all the way to the Cross... All four Gospels describe the start of Jesus' public life with Him receiving baptism in the Jordan from the hands of John. If we stay focused for today's reflection on the vertical central axis, we see that it illustrates beautifully how the Son of God descended from Heaven. It was an act of divine humility. We can almost see the Father in our painting saying the words describe in our Gospel reading: And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' That is why Jesus came into the world: to love us. He descended all the way down to earth in order to search out each one of us. He is like a lover in search of his beloved... each one of us!

Jesus' baptism inaugurates His mission. In the same way, our own Baptism inaugurates our mission to serve God. Speaking at a general audience in Rome, Pope Francis said: "I would like to ask each one of you here, and you can respond in your heart: how many of you remember the date of your baptism?" He said we should find out our baptismal date and celebrate it each year, rather than just our birthdays. This would help remind us how important our baptism is and the mission we have embarked upon.

<https://christian.art/daily-gospel-reading/luke-3-15-1621-22-2022/>



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Daily Gospel Reading and Art Reflection