

The Baptism of Jesus (Year B)

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7—The Servant of the Lord

1. Identity of the Servant (42:1-3)
 - a. Servant: “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold”
 - b. Beloved: “My chosen, in whom my soul delights”
 - c. Spirit: “I have put my spirit (Hebrew *ruach*) upon him”
2. Mission of the Servant: (42:4, 6-7)
 - a. New Torah: the “coastlands” wait for his “law” (Hebrew *torah*)
 - b. New Covenant: he is given as “a covenant” to the peoples

Psalm 29—The Voice of the Lord

1. Voice of the LORD (Hebrew *qōl*): upon “the waters” (cf. Gen 1)
2. Throne of the LORD: “over the flood” (cf. Gen 1)

Mark 1:7-11—The Baptism of Jesus

1. The Coming One: the coming of Jesus = the coming of YHWH (cf. Isaiah 40)

*A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God...
[L]ift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”
Behold, the Lord GOD comes.. (Isaiah 40:3, 9-10)*

2. The Baptism and the Crucifixion:

The Baptism of Jesus

1. The “heavens” are “torn open”
(Greek *schizō*)
2. Voice speaks from heaven:
“You are my beloved Son
(Greek *huios*)”
(Mark 1:10-11)

The Crucifixion of Jesus

1. The Temple veil is “torn”
(Greek *schizō*) in two
2. Centurion speaks:
“Surely this man was
the Son (Greek *huios*) of God”
(Mark 15:38-39)

The Living Tradition

Benedict XVI: Looking at the events in the light of the Cross and Resurrection, the Christian people realized what happened: *Jesus loaded the burden of all mankind’s guilt upon his shoulders; he bore it down into the depths of the Jordan. He inaugurated his public activity by stepping into the place of sinners. His inaugural gesture is an anticipation of the Cross...* The Baptism is an acceptance of death for the sins of

humanity, and the voice that calls out “This is my beloved Son” over the baptismal water is an anticipatory reference to the Resurrection. This explains why, in his own discourses, Jesus uses the word *baptism* to refer to his death (cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). (Pope Benedict, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 1, p. 18 [emphasis added])

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Baptism of the Lord, Year B)

1. Who is the mysterious Servant in the book of Isaiah? What characteristics and qualities of his match up with those of Jesus?

2. Why does the Church choose Psalm 29 about the “voice” of the LORD for this feast day? How is it related to Jesus’ baptism?

3. What are the parallels between the baptism of Jesus in Mark and the Crucifixion and Resurrection? How does Pope Benedict’s reading of Jesus’ baptism transform the meaning of our *own* baptism?

For Further Study

1. Pope Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*. Trans. Adriam J. Walker. New York: Doubleday, 2007.