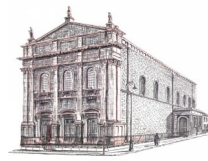




PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 9TH/10TH JANUARY 2021



Fr. Brendan Kealy Adm.: 087 9117575 Office:
Tel:018554078, Mr John Kelly: Chairperson Parish Pastoral Council

Jesus I Trust in You E-mail : office@stagathasparish.ie **Website:** www.stagathasparish.ie

POPE REMINDS US TO CHERISH OUR BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

Pope Francis celebrates the Baptism of the Lord inviting the faithful to celebrate the date of their Baptism, the day they received Holy Spirit and became the beloved children of God. Marking the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Pope Francis reflected on the Liturgy of the day that tells of how Jesus' public life began. The Pope noted that after the feast of the Epiphany, the Liturgy takes a leap of some 30 years, "hidden" time spent by Jesus with his family, obeying his parents, studying and working. All of the evangelists, he said, narrate his public life that they say spanned about three years.

It is striking, he said, that the Lord spent most of his time on earth living an ordinary life, without standing out. "It is a fine message for us: it reveals *the greatness of daily life*, the importance in the eyes of God of every gesture and moment of life, even the most simple and hidden," he said. After these 30 years of hidden life, the Pope continued, Jesus' public life begins with the baptism in the River Jordan. He explained that John's baptism consisted in a penitential rite: "it was a sign of one's willingness to convert, asking forgiveness of one's sins. Jesus surely did not need it."

THE LORD DOES SAVES US BY TAKING ON OUR SINS

And although John the Baptist tries to stop him, the Lord insists, he continued, because He wants to be with the sinners: "for this reason he gets in line with them and does the same thing they do. He goes down into the river to immerse himself in the same condition we are in." On the first day of his ministry, the Pope said, Jesus thus offers us his "programmatic manifesto", telling us that "He does not save us from on high, with a sovereign decision or act of force, but by coming to meet us and taking our sins upon himself." This is how God conquers worldly evil, he said, "by humbling himself and taking charge of it. This is also the way, he emphasized, that we can lift up others: "not by judging, not by suggesting what to do, but by becoming neighbours, empathizing, sharing God's love. "Closeness," he reiterated, "is God's style with us!"

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Pope Francis went on to explain that after this act of compassion by Jesus, another extraordinary thing happens: "the heavens open and the Trinity is finally revealed." As the evangelist Mark tells us (Mk 1:10), the Holy Spirit descends from the heavens like a dove and the Father says to Jesus: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." God, the Pope explained, "manifests [reveals] himself when mercy appears, because that is his face." This episode shows us how Jesus becomes the servant of sinners and is proclaimed the Son, he continued: "He lowers himself upon us and the Spirit descends upon him."

LOVE CALLS FOR LOVE

"Love calls for love", the Pope said, and this applies to us: "in each act of service, in every work of mercy we perform, God manifests himself and sets his gaze upon the world." This reveals to us that even before we do anything, our life was marked by mercy and it was laid upon us. And this, he said, happened on the day of our Baptism: "There, we were immersed in the love of Christ who died and rose for us. There, we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. There, the Father said to each one of us, as he did to Jesus: *Thou art my beloved Son*". May Our Lady, to whom we now pray, help us to cherish our *baptismal identity*, which lies at the base of faith and life." Pope Francis reminded the faithful that tomorrow marks the start of Ordinary Time according to the liturgical year and invited us to never tire of invoking the light and the force of the Holy Spirit. "It is love that changes everything", he said, "when you do ordinary things with love they become extraordinary, and if we are open to the Spirit, the Spirit will inspire our everyday thoughts and actions." (Vatican News).

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE NEW SPIRITUAL LIFE TO US IN BAPTISM

Jesus made a New Eternal Covenant with us through Baptism, in order to save us from death and give us Eternal Life. There is an image of both death and life in baptism. In the story of Noah's Ark, which symbolises the Church, the waters brought death to the world, but those in the Ark were saved, because they entered through a doorway at the side of the Ark, symbolising the open Heart of Jesus. It was the dove who returned with an olive branch, symbolising the Spirit bringing us New Life and Peace, beyond the Ark (Church on earth). The association of Water and the Spirit is explained by the twofold purpose for which baptism was instituted, namely, to wash-away the presence of Original Sin, in order for it not to give birth to Eternal Death again. Jesus replaces the presence of Death with Himself, who is Life. The Gift of Faith enables us to live by the Holy Spirit and in turn, win the reward of Holiness. This virtue of Holiness is essential, to practice, if we wish to enter Heaven someday. We must understand that the inherited mark of original sin on the soul from Adam and Eve, renders the soul spiritually dead and crippled. Jesus is the New Adam come to heal our souls.

REBORN AGAIN

To signify this spiritual transition from Death (Sin) to New Life, the Sacrament of Baptism is administered by means of the water poured on our heads three times and the invocation of each of the Three Divine Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whatever Grace there is in the blessed baptism waters comes not from its own nature, but from the presence of the Holy Spirit, who we hear today is present in the form of a Dove (Mk 1:7-11). Baptism is not a cleansing of the body, but of the soul, creating a new birth to our divine nature. This is what it means to be **born-again of water and the Spirit**. Jesus is preparing us for our New Life after our Resurrection. He tells us how we should live here and now. He teaches us to be loving, peaceable, forgiving, long-suffering, and keep our temple bodies undefiled. We are asked not to be greedy for worldly wealth, but to desire Heavenly wealth. In this way we can achieve, by our own free choice, the kind of life that will be natural in the world to come.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Through the Holy Spirit we are restored as heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. In baptism we obtain the right to call God our Father, which entitles us to become sharers in the Grace of Christ. We are now children of Light, and we will share in everlasting Glory. It is up to us to remain in a state of Grace in order to inherit Eternal Life. This is why Jesus remains in the Sacrament of Confession, to wipe-away sin, giving us New Grace to remain holy. Every Blessing is showered upon us on earth.

WHY DID JESUS GET BAPTISED?

Jesus, who was sinless, received Baptism for our benefit, by spiritually bringing us all down with Him into the baptising waters of the Jordan, to remove Eternal Death from our Human Nature. God is taking back His People, who had *fallen into the power of the Devil* (Acts 10:34-38), and giving us Eternal Life. Eternal Life comes in the Person of Jesus Christ as opposed to Eternal Death, which comes in the person of Satan. Jesus (Mk 1:7-11) ascended from the waters, and suddenly the **Heavens opened** and God's Voice spoke from Heaven: *This is My Son, the Beloved; My favour rests on Him*. The Triune God wants us to recognise Him in the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, as Jesus Christ. Through our Baptism each one of us is ordered to the Life of Christ and God the Father also looks on us with favour. God bless, Fr. Brendan.