

The baptism of repentance and purification in the Holy Spirit**Reading1:** Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**Reading2:** 2 Peter 3:8-14**ResponsorialPs:** Psalm 85:9-14**Gospel** : Mark 1:1-8**Gospel Reading:** *Mark 1:1-8*

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight – John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Meditation:

John the Baptist's life was fuelled by one burning passion - to point others to Jesus Christ and to the coming of his kingdom. Who is John the Baptist and what is the significance of his message for our lives? Scripture tells us that John was *filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb* by Christ himself, whom Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth John leaped in her womb as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The fire of the Spirit dwelt in John and made him the forerunner of the coming Messiah. John was led by the Spirit into the wilderness prior to his ministry where he grew in the word of God and was tested in preparation for his prophetic mission. John's clothing was reminiscent of the prophet Elijah.

John broke the prophetic silence of the previous centuries when he began to speak the word of God to the people of Israel. His message was similar to the message of the Old Testament prophets who chided the people of God for their unfaithfulness and who tried to awaken true repentance in them. Among a people unconcerned with the things of God, it was his work to awaken their interest, unsettle them from their complacency, and arouse in them enough good will to recognize and receive Christ when he came. Are you eager to hear God's word and to be changed by it through the power of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus tells us that John the Baptist was *more than a prophet*. John was the *voice* of the Consoler who is coming. He completed the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah. What the prophets had carefully searched for and angels longed to see, now came to completion as John made the way ready for the coming of the Messiah, God's Anointed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. With John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to the human race of the "divine likeness", prefiguring what would be achieved with and in the Lord Jesus.

John's baptism was for repentance - turning away from sin and taking on a new way of life according to God's word. Our baptism in Jesus Christ by water and the Spirit results in a new birth and entry into God's kingdom as his beloved sons and daughters. The Lord Jesus comes to baptize each one of us in his Holy Spirit so that we may walk in his truth and holiness and radiate the joy of the Gospel to all we meet. God's word has power to change and transform our lives so that we may be lights that point others to Jesus Christ. Like John the Baptist, we too are called to give testimony to the light and truth of Christ.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. How can we grow in our understanding and experience of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
2. How do you point others to Jesus Christ in the way you live, speak, and treat others? Give an example in your life.

"Lord, let your light burn brightly in my heart that I may know the joy and freedom of your kingdom. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and empower me to witness the truth of your Gospel and to point others to Jesus Christ."

Source: www.presentationministries.com; www.theworkofgod.org;
dailyscripture.servantsoftheword.org