

Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows





Holy Baptism

Tuesday in the third week of Lent.

Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**

Commentary

Lent was traditionally a time of penitence and fasting for those preparing to be baptised. As such, each Sunday's Gospel points to a particular aspect of Holy baptism. In other words, their intention is catechesis, teaching about discipleship.

The first Sunday recalls the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and so reminds those preparing for baptism that they too must reject evil and face their struggles courageously. The second Sunday links the calling of Abraham and the Transfiguration. Like Abraham, those wishing to be baptised must set out on their journey trusting the promise that no matter what they may face God will lead them to a place of Transfiguration where they too will be revealed as beloved sons and daughters of God.

The next three Sundays present us with the baptismal images of water, light and life. On the third Sunday we meet the Samaritan woman by the well, who speaks of her longing for the living water, that is, the water of the Spirit Himself. This is the very water in which we are immersed in baptism and, as Martin Luther states in his *Small Catechism*, ‘it is not simply plain water, but water used according to God’s command and connected with God’s word.’

On the fourth Sunday we are presented with the astounding truth that in Christ the divine light has come into the world. However, many have proven by their lives that they prefer to live in darkness rather than face the light. In baptism we promise to turn towards the light of Christ, to receive it, and carry it to those around us.

On the fifth Sunday of Lent we are asked to reflect on the theme of life. More accurately, what it means to have abundant life. In the gospel passage from St John Jesus says: “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single grain, but if it dies it yields a rich harvest....Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

Here, Jesus is describing the ‘baptismal life’; the life that all Christians are called to live. It is a life of daily dying to our selfish wants and desires and rising as a new creation in the abundance of the Spirit. The baptismal life is characterised by a willingness to get up when we have fallen and to follow Christ through his paschal mystery into the heart of God.

Meditation

Lent brings us to the foot of the font, Holy Week to the foot of the Cross. Lent is about training us to embrace the baptismal life we have been called to live. Far from being an ordinary life, in Baptism, we are immersed into the very life of God. The roundel on the second page depicts the baptism of Christ and it, we see the words of God the Father; God the Son standing in the water and God the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. Baptism brings us in to this triune life.

That we have been immersed into God means we are called to let that life flow through us and out in the world. It is a life of sacrifice, generosity, mutuality and freedom. Moreover, it is sustained by our connection to the Church and especially by our participation in the Holy Eucharist.

Meditate on, and read through, the promises from the baptismal liturgy below and renew your baptismal vows before God.

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

I come to Christ.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

By the power for your Holy Spirit,

you give to your faithful people

new life in the water of baptism.

Guide and strengthen us by the same

Spirit, that, we who are born again

may serve you in faith and love and

grow into the full stature of your Son,

Jesus Christ who is alive and reigns

with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

Amen.