

Our Faith

1 John 5.1-9

St John writes about faith and love. He begins this chapter by pointing out that belief in Jesus makes one a child of God and by keeping God's commandments we show that we love him, and our task is not burdensome because with faith we can overcome all the temptations of this world. John asks, 'Who can overcome the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?' Jesus shed water and blood when he died 'and it is the Spirit that bears witness for the Spirit is truth.' Water and blood have flowed from the side of Christ and with the Spirit they converge to bear witness in favour of the mission of the Son who gives life. The water and blood are interpreted by many of the Fathers of the Church as symbols of Baptism and the Eucharist and these two sacraments as signifying the Church which is born like a second Eve from the side of the second Adam, Christ.

Prayers to Remember

Accept, O Father, the sacrifice of all our thanksgivings: of praise, for your great mercies already received; of prayers, that they may continue and increase; of penitence, for the sins we have committed; and the love of our hearts, being the only gift that you seek or desire; and this we ask through the merits of your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

John Donne, 1572-1631

From the Fathers

'Jesus rises from the waters; the world rises with Him. The heavens like Paradise with its flaming sword, closed by Adam for himself and his descendants, are rent open. The Spirit comes to Him as to an equal, bearing witness to His Godhead. A voice bears witness to Him from heaven, His place of origin. The Spirit descends in bodily form like the dove that so long ago announced the ending of the flood and so gives honour to the body that is one with God. Today, let us do honour to Christ's baptism and celebrate this feast in holiness. Be cleansed entirely and continue to be cleansed. Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men, for whom His every word and every revelation exist.'

From 'Oration 39: On Holy Light', by Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390, bishop, theologian)

10th January
2021

The Baptism
of the Lord

Solidarity



In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1.9-11

One of the deep needs of humans that has come to the fore over the past few months is the need for solidarity. Solidarity means being alongside someone in bonds of love, respect and trust. When the Church is at its best solidarity is a hallmark of our common life. As we keep the feast of the Baptism of the Lord one of the great themes that it carries for us is solidarity. Jesus steps into the water of the River Jordan to show solidarity with the whole people of Israel in their yearning for salvation. He shows solidarity with all humanity by subjecting himself to the sign of cleansing from sin. He shows solidarity with creation by allowing his naked body to be clothed with water and air. He shows solidarity with the mission of St John the Baptist by receiving baptism from him rather than vice versa. Finally we see his solidarity with the Father who announces the beloved Son in the power of the Spirit. At Jordan the mission of Jesus is disclosed: it is one of solidarity, establishing the bonds of solidarity between God and us, bonds so strong they can never be broken. It's the sign of Jesus' full immersion in the world that he has come to bring home to the Father. Each one of us receives a share in that solidarity through our own baptism, and today is a good moment to reflect on the day we ourselves were immersed into that relationship. Do you know when and where you were baptised? Do you celebrate the anniversary of your baptism each year?