

Orate Fratres



The Baptism of Christ by Piero della Francesca, 1540's, National Gallery, London

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On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

By Abbot Gueranger: An excerpt from his work,
The Liturgical Year



Baptism of the Lord - Chinese porcelain, 18th century

Now the decrees of Divine Wisdom had chosen water as the instrument of this sublime regeneration of the human race. Hence, in the beginning of the world, we find the Spirit of God moving over the waters (Gen. 1: 2), in order that they might "even then conceive a principle of sanctifying power," as the Church expresses it in Her Blessing of the Baptismal Font during the Easter Vigil. But before being called to fulfil the designs of God's mercy, this element of water had to be used by the Divine Justice for the chastisement of a sinful world. With the exception of one family, the whole human race perished, by the terrible judgment of God, in the waters of the deluge.

A fresh indication of the future supernatural power of this chosen element was given by the Dove, which Noe sent forth from the Ark; it returned to him, bearing in its beak an olive branch; the symbol that peace was given to the earth by its having been buried in water. But this was only the announcement of the mystery; its accomplishment was not to be for long ages to come.

Meanwhile, God spoke to His people by many events, which were figurative of the future Mystery of Baptism. Thus, for example, it was by passing through the waters of the Red Sea that they entered into the Promised Land, and during the miraculous passage, a pillar of a cloud was seen covering both the Israelites and the waters to which they owed their deliverance.

But in order that water should have the power to purify man from his sins, it was necessary that it should be brought into contact with the Sacred Body of the Incarnate God. The Eternal Father had sent His Son into the world, not only that He might be its Lawgiver, Redeemer, and the Victim of its salvation, but that He might also be the Sanctifier of Water; and it was in this sacred element that He would divinely bear testimony to His being His Son, and manifest Him to the world a second time.

Jesus, therefore, being now thirty years of age, comes to the Jordan, a river already celebrated for the prophetic miracles which had been wrought in its waters. The Jewish people, roused by the preaching of John the Baptist, were flocking thither in order to receive a baptism which could indeed excite a sorrow for sin, but could not effect its forgiveness. Our Divine King approaches the river, not, of course, to receive sanctification, for He Himself is the Author of all Justice—but to impart to Water the power of bringing forth, as the Church expresses the mystery, a new and heavenly progeny. He goes down into the stream, not, like Josue, to walk dry-shod through its bed, but to let its waters encompass Him, and receive from Him, both for itself and for the Waters of the whole earth, the sanctifying power which they would retain forever. The saintly Baptist places his trembling hand upon the Sacred Head of the Redeemer, and bends it beneath the water; the Sun of Justice vivifies this His creature; He imparts to it the glow of life-giving fruitfulness; and Water thus becomes the prolific source of supernatural life.

But in this commencement of a new creation, we look for the intervention of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. All Three are here. The heavens open; the Dove descends, not as a mere symbol, prophetic of some future grace, but as the sign of the actual presence of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of life, Who gives peace to men and changes their hearts. The Dove hovers above the head of Jesus, overshadowing at one and the same time the Humanity of the Incarnate Word and the water which bathed His sacred Body.

The manifestation is not complete; the Father's voice is still to be heard speaking over the Water, and moving by its power the entire element throughout the earth. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of David: The Voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of majesty hath thundered. The Voice of the Lord breaketh cedars, that is, the pride of the devils. The Voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire, that is, the anger of God. The Voice of the Lord shaketh the desert, and maketh the flood to swell, that is, announces a new Deluge, the Deluge of Divine Mercy (Ps. 128). And what says this Voice of the Father? This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3: 17).

Thus was the holiness of Emmanuel manifested by the presence of the Dove and by the voice of the Father, as His kingly character had been previously manifested by the mute testimony of the star. The mystery is accomplished, the Waters are invested with a spiritual purifying power, and Jesus comes from the Jordan and ascends the bank, raising up with Himself the world, regenerated and sanctified, with all its crimes and defilements drowned in the stream. Such is the interpretation and language of the Holy Fathers of the Church regarding this great event of Our Lord's life.



Ancient font among the Faqra ruins in Lebanon. This formerly pagan site was later used by Christians.

The Rite of Consecrating Baptismal Water outside of the Easter Vigil according the Roman Ritual in the Extraordinary Form

At the font the Litany of the Saints is recited. Before the verse: *That you graciously hear us, the following verse is said: "That Thou bless ✕ and sanctify ✕ this font which serves to give birth to new offspring for you."* All respond: "We beg Thee to hear us." With the litany having concluded, the priest recites Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed aloud and then the verses:
V. Lord, thou art the fountain of life.
R. And by thy splendor we will see the light.
V. Lord, hear my prayer.
R. And let my cry come unto thee.
V. The Lord be with you.
R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Almighty everlasting God, be present at these mysteries of Thy great love, be present at these sacramental rites. Send forth the Spirit of adoption to beget new life in the people who are born to Thee from the font of baptism, so that what we purpose to do by our lowly ministry may have its full effect by Thy power; through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Exorcism of Water

The priest then says to the water: "God's creature, water, I cast out the demon from you by the living ✕ God, by the true ✕ God, by the holy ✕ God, by God who in the beginning separated you by His word from the dry land, whose Spirit hovered over you, who made you flow out of Paradise." *The priest then divides the water with his hand and sprinkles it out of the font toward the four quarters of the earth; and then continues:*

And He commanded thee to water the whole earth with thy four rivers; He who in the desert by the wood cast into thee changed thee from bitter water into sweet water fit to drink; who brought thee forth from the rock to quench the thirst of the languishing people He had delivered from Egypt. I cast out the demon from thee by Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who in Cana of Galilee changed thee into wine by a wondrous miracle, who walked on the waves, and who was baptized in thee by John in the Jordan; who from His pierced side let thee flow along with His blood; who commanded His disciples to baptize with thee all those who believe, saying: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

May thou become sacred water, blessed water, a water to wash away filth and to cleanse from sin. Therefore, I command you, every unclean spirit, delusion and falsehood personified, to leave and stay

far from this creature, water, thus letting it be for all who will be baptized in it a fountain gushing forth everlasting life, begetting in them new birth in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is coming to judge both the living and the dead and the world by fire. R. Amen.

Let us pray.

Holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, we earnestly entreat you, the sanctifier of supernatural water, to look with favour on our lowly ministry, and to send Thy holy messenger down on this water, which we are making ready to cleanse and purify the human race. And once they have been cleansed of the sins of their former life, freed of their guilt, and given a new birth, may they remain a clean dwelling for your Holy Ghost; through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

He breathes thrice upon the water in the form of the Greek letter ψ, then incenses the font. After this he pours the oil of catechumens into the water in the form of a cross, saying:

May this font be sanctified and made fruitful by the oil that sanctifies for those who are born anew herein for everlasting life; in the name of the Father, ✕ and of the Son, ✕ and of the Holy ✕ Ghost. R. Amen.

Then he pours in chrism in the same manner, saying:

May this infusion of the chrism of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost, the Consoler, be done in the name of the Holy Trinity. R. Amen.



Blessing of Holy Water: the exorcism of salt: from the Sherbrooke Missal - "I exorcise thee, created element salt, by the living God, by the true God, by the holy God, ... "

After this he takes the two phials of holy oils, and pours both together into the water in the form of a cross, saying:

May this mingling of the chrism that sanctifies with the oil of anointing and the water of baptism be done in the name of the Father, ✕ and of the Son, ✕ and of the Holy ✕ Ghost. R. Amen.

He then mixes the oils and water with his hand, throughout the font. Then he cleanses the oil from his hand with a piece of bread and proceeds with the baptism.



Infant baptism - Abrégé des histoires divines, French c.1300-1310, (? Amiens), Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest Shrewsbury Weekly Schedule *

		Ordo	Cathedral	St Winefride's	Mass Intention
Sun	12 Jan	The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, II class.		11.15 Low Mass	Anthony <i>Private Intention of the Priest</i>
Mon	13 Jan	On the Commemoration of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, II class.	7.30am Low Mass		<i>Private Intention of the Priest</i> * Johnson Family
Tue	14 Jan	St. Hilary Bishop, Confessor, and Doctor of the Church, III class, Com. of St. Felix Priest and Martyr.	7.30am Low Mass	6pm Holy Hour with Benediction and Confessions 7pm Low Mass	Catherine & Anastasia Stevens McGowan/ Bond families
Wed	15 Jan	St. Paul the First Hermit, Confessor, III class, Com. of St. Maurus Abbot.	7.30am Low Mass		<i>Private Intention of the Priest</i> * The Campion Family
Thu	16 Jan	St. Marcellus I Pope and Martyr, III class.	7.30am Low Mass 11am Holy Hour with Benediction and Confessions		Rachel <i>Private Intention of the Priest</i>
Fri	17 Jan	St. Anthony Abbot, III class.	7.30am Low Mass	6pm Holy Hour with Benediction and Confessions 7pm Low Mass	Helen RIP <i>Private Intention of the Priest</i>
Sat	18 Jan	Our Lady on Saturday, Comm. of St. Prisca Virgin and Martyr.		10.45am Confessions 11.15 Low Mass	<i>Private Intention of the Priest</i> * <i>Private Intention of the Priest</i>
Sun	19 Jan	II Post Epiphany		11.15 Sung Mass	<i>Private Intention of the Priest</i>
St Wulstan Little Malvern 3.15pm Sung Mass					<i>Private Intention of the Priest</i>

*Intention for a Mass said privately

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