

Reflection on Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

Luke's opening words in today's Gospel are striking. He writes: "The people were filled with expectation and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ." The Israelites had been waiting for centuries for "the Christ:" the One who would come and save them. To some of the people, John may have been a likely candidate for the Christ who was to come. He was a mesmerizing and ascetical man. He was an engaging speaker and he was a prophet.

However, John clarified his role for the people. He told them: "I am baptizing you with water, but one who is mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals." Then John added, "He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire." John is speaking of Jesus whom he had just baptized.

After Jesus was baptized, he went off to pray. While he was in prayer, the heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. And then a voice from heaven said: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life. It is the gateway to life in the Spirit. Through Baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God. We become members of Christ's Body, the Church. Thus, as members of Christ's Body, we are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in Church's mission. "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."

Most likely many of us were baptized as infants. Thus we likely do not have a memory of receiving this sacrament. Yet Baptism is the keystone for the other sacraments.

What gifts have I received from the Sacrament of Baptism?

Am I grateful for this sacrament?

Do I truly appreciate the Sacraments of the Church or do I take them for granted?

In reflecting on these questions, you may find a new appreciation for the gift of your baptism, and it may strengthen your appreciation for your parents, your faith, and for the love God has for you. You are a child of God. What more do you need or want?