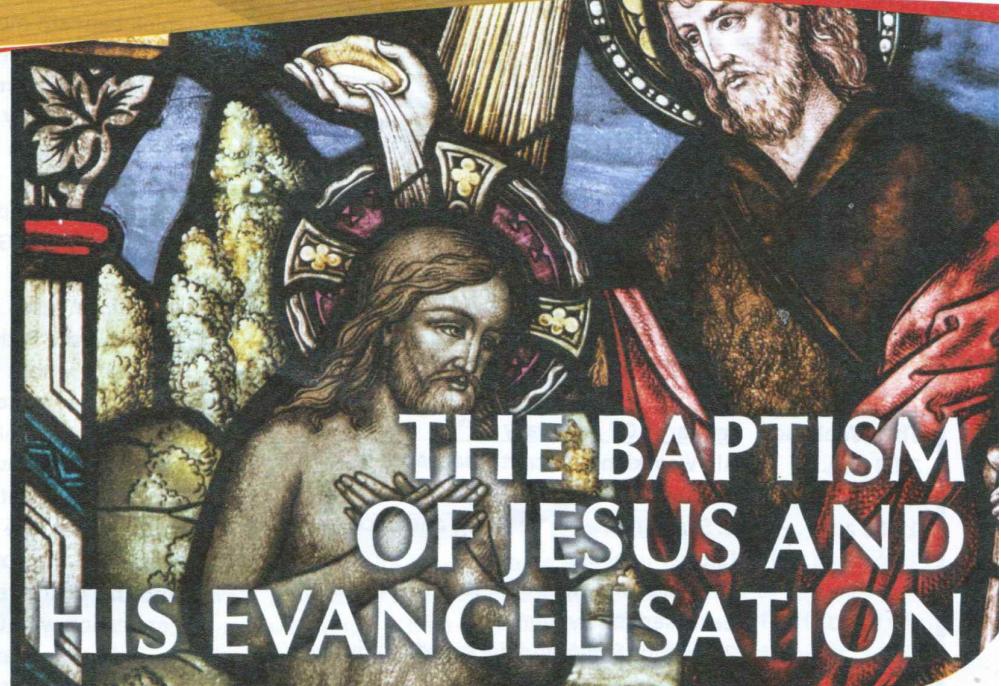




The baptism of Jesus is hard to comprehend for a number of reasons. To start with, it was a baptism of repentance, a ritual that signified that the person receiving it was willing to turn away from their sins. Jesus was the son of God. Yes, he was like us in all things, but with the exception of sin. So why did he submit to the baptism of John as if he were a sinner? St Paul gave us a possible answer when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' In other words, although he committed no sins himself, Jesus took the effects of the curse of sin upon himself, so that we might be granted an unmerited share in his sinlessness.

There is a second problem. As the divine Son of God, Jesus was endowed, from the instant of his conception, with every perfection of divinity, including unimaginable holiness. So, the question arises, why did Jesus need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the time of his baptism by John? Was he deficient in some way up to that moment? Was he lacking some endowment or capacity? One could tentatively suggest that the answer is yes and no! No, because as God, there was



no defect or lack in Jesus. He was already filled with the Holy Spirit. But yes, because as man, 'Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man' (Lk 2:52).

The baptism of Jesus marked an important turning point in his biography, a transition from his private life to his public vocation as the promised Messiah who would proclaim and demonstrate the good news of the coming of God's kingdom by means of powerful words and deeds. It is arguable that, although he was already full of grace, God the Father gave him, as man, all that he needed to engage effectively in his mission. As Jesus

testified in his synagogue in Nazareth, 'The Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor' (Lk 4:18). Furthermore, from that moment on, he began to perform deeds of power such as healings, exorcisms, miracles and even raising of the dead. As he said, 'if I drive out the demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom has already come upon you' (Lk 11:20). ■

— Pat Collins



## Reflection

Reflect on the experience of Jesus, symbolised by the opened heavens, the dove resting on him, and the voice from heaven.



## Lesson

For Christians, Matthew's presentation of the baptism of Jesus by John prefigures Christian baptism, in which the presence of the Father works through Christ.



## Prayer

Lord, pour on us the great gift of your Holy Spirit to be our lifelong companion and comforter. Make us aware of this form of the divine presence, especially in the dark moments of our lives. Amen.

### THE COMMUNION RITE

At the Saviour's command ...  
**Our Father, who art in heaven, ...**  
 Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, ...  
**For the kingdom,**  
**the power and the glory are yours**  
**now and for ever.**  
 Lord Jesus Christ, ... **Amen.**  
 The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
 And with your spirit.  
**Lamb of God, you take away the sins ...**  
*Showing the Host to the people, the priest says:*  
 Behold the Lamb of God, ...  
**Lord, I am not worthy**

that you should enter under my roof,  
 but only say the word  
 and my soul shall be healed.

**Communion Antiphon** (Jn 1:32,34)

**Behold the One of whom John said:**  
 I have seen and testified  
 that this is the Son of God.

**Prayer after Communion**

Nourished with these sacred gifts,  
 we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord,  
 that, faithfully listening to your Only

Begotten Son,  
 we may be your children in name and in truth.  
 Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**