

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (*Luke 3:21-22*)

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a Voice came from heaven: "You are My Son, Whom I love; with You I am well pleased." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – The Quiet but Immense Power of God in His Sacraments

In the holy Sacraments are the actions of Jesus Christ through the person of the priest, imparting divine graces to those who receive them in proper disposition. *The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us... (CCC1131).* For each major stage of the life of a child of God, there is a corresponding sacrament through which God's divine graces are poured out in torrents to purify, heal, strengthen, nourish, transform, sanctify and prepare for a particular vocation in life. The Catholic Church has 7 sacraments: Baptism, Confession, Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick. *Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming His adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life (CCC 2021).*

By His passion and resurrection, Jesus gained for us all the graces we need to live a holy life so as to attain our glorious eternal inheritance in heaven. How does Christ ensure that these precious graces are transmitted to us in torrents in order to bring about our transformation that no other action or power in the whole universe can achieve? This, Christ did through the holy sacraments which He personally instituted and entrusted to His Church of which He is the Head. The sacraments are indispensable in helping us attain eternal life; nothing can replace them for in them are the actions of Christ Himself unto our souls. Thus, they are great aids for our sanctification, and we should receive them often with the proper disposition.

God's quiet but immense power is readily available to us through Christ's Sacraments. The Sacraments make us grow in holiness because they impart divine graces (sanctifying and actual) to the recipient if received with the proper disposition. It is the sanctifying graces imparted to us that make us holy. Actual graces received provide internal strength to walk in the way of the Lord in fidelity to all His commandments even in a world that vehemently opposes His teachings. The graces received in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony strengthen the couple to live a holy marriage, to be always faithful to each other to preserve the marital bond which is instituted by Christ Himself. Thus, what is impossible from a human perspective becomes possible and a way of true Christian living through the power of God's grace. Similarly, the graces imparted in the Sacrament of Holy Orders enable the ordained priest to live a holy life in chastity and in filial obedience to God even in a world of impurity and rebellion. Good deeds done in true charity merit an increase of divine graces. Due to the graces conferred by Baptism, a newly baptized baby is holy because it is full of sanctifying grace although it has not yet done any good deed. Sin leads to the loss of graces from our souls. When all its sanctifying graces are lost, death of the soul results. Thus, through our cooperation with God's graces we can live a life in fulfillment of God's commandments to achieve eternal life (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).

Through living a sacramental life of grace, we started sharing God's divine life even while on earth. God the Father uses the occasion of the baptism of Jesus in River Jordan to reveal His divine Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, though the Author of All Graces submitted Himself to baptism, and by this action emphasizes to us the importance of living a sacramental life of grace. *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2 Corinthians 4:7).* Thus, we may be weak and fragile like clay pots but within us is the all-surpassing power of God's grace which empowers us to walk on the true path to become what God created us to be: holy like Himself. With God's graces assisting us at every instance and present moment of our everyday life, walking on the true path in fidelity to God's commandments can become a rest for our weary souls (cf. Matthew 11:28-29) and a joyful, hope-filled journey towards our glorious eternity awaiting us in heaven.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, thank You with all my heart for the sacraments You bestowed on Your Church. Through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, I, even on earth, can become as close to You as I possibly can when I receive You in Holy Communion. Even in heaven, I will not be able to come as close to You as I can during Holy Communion. Through the Sacrament of Confession, I am made clean of all my sins in one act of true repentance. Your sacraments reflect Your love, Your mercy, Your providence, Your wisdom, Your power as You prepare Your children for an eternal life with the Father. Help me be grateful, to appreciate and understand what You have done in bestowing such wondrous gifts on Your Church. Mary, full of grace, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk