

From the Fathers

From a sermon by Saint Gregory Nazianzen (329-90)

Christ is bathed in light; let us also be bathed in light. Christ is baptized; let us also go down with him, and rise with him.

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. He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of him who is the light of heaven. You are to enjoy more and more the pure and dazzling light of the Trinity, as now you have received – though not in its fullness – a ray of its splendour, proceeding from the one God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Liturgical colours: white

White is the colour of heaven. Liturgically, it is used to celebrate feasts of the Lord; Christmas and Easter, the great seasons of the Lord; and the saints. Not that you will always see white in church, because if something more splendid, such as gold, is available, that can and should be used instead. We are, after all, celebrating. In the earliest centuries all vestments were white – the white of baptismal purity and of the robes worn by the armies of the redeemed in the Apocalypse, washed white in the blood of the Lamb. As the Church grew secure enough to be able to plan her liturgy, she began to use colour so that our sense of sight could deepen our experience of the mysteries of salvation, just as incense recruits our sense of smell, and music that of hearing. Over the centuries various schemes of colour for feasts and seasons were worked out, and it is only as late as the 19th century that they were harmonized into their present form.

9th January 2022

The Baptism of the Lord



The Dove

Throughout the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles the Spirit is described as wind, fire and breath but today, however, we have a unique occasion. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit 'descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove.' The dove appears eighteen times in the whole of the Bible. Four of these occasions are in accounts of the Baptism of Jesus and five in Genesis Chapter 8 when the dove is sent out of the Ark by Noah to discover if the land had emerged from the flood. Out of the waters of Baptism Jesus emerges and the dove returns to rest on him. Not only a sign of peace, but of a new beginning for the whole of creation. Here we are reminded that the waters of Baptism are as total and complete in their effect on humanity as Noah's Flood. A whole new landscape is emerging for humanity.

Today's Gospel: St. Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22

Prayers to remember:

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ did take our nature upon him, and was baptised for our sakes in the river Jordan: mercifully grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may also be partakers of thy Holy Spirit; through the same Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.