

Mark 1:4 - 11

Gospel Reflection

Mark's Gospel skips right by the nativity narrative and begins with John the Baptist in the wilderness, probably the desert region west of the Dead Sea. John's message is one of repentance-baptism; the deliberate turning from sin to righteousness. John is recalling the teaching of the prophets. God always grants forgiveness when there is repentance. We may picture John as somewhat eccentric, but a man living in the desert would not hesitate to eat insects, and locusts were among the clean foods. This passage shows that John was leading an austere life.

Jesus had been growing up and living in Nazareth. He now begins his ministry near the river Jordan. It is important to note that all three persons of the trinity are involved in Jesus baptism, Jesus being baptized, the spirit descending on him, and the father's voice coming from heaven.

Mark relates this as an inner experience of Jesus and his call to ministry, yet Mark makes it an epiphany to the world of who Jesus was. In the coming weeks we will hear about Jesus' words and deeds, culminating in the transformation and then after the move to Jerusalem, the passion. The baptism of Jesus puts us in the right frame of mind to hear these stories, the whole story of our redemption. This liturgical pilgrimage with Jesus from Nazareth, to Galilee and then Jerusalem is a model for our whole Christian life of discipleship, beginning with our own baptism. May we be called to keep the covenant we made are our own baptism.

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