

THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

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"...Whoever claims to abide in him ought to live (just) as he lived." (1 John 2:6) With these words, St. John tells us that if we are abiding in Jesus, we should be living a life like his. How is this possible? What was Jesus' life like during the time of his ministry and how does this compare with the lives we live today? The first action we see him take as he walks into public life is to seek out his cousin John and ask to be baptized. Certainly this wasn't necessary for the sinless Son of God, but in his submission, he gives us a very important example. As he steps into the Jordan, he accepts the role and mission which the Father has directed. In his obedience, he shows his love for the Father and for the sinners he has come to redeem. Scripture tells us that "the heavens were opened" and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove as the Father spoke those words of witness: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased". (Matt 3:16) The entire Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is manifested (shown forth) in this amazing scene. In this baptism of water, Jesus is also anticipating the baptism of suffering and death which he would soon encounter and embrace. Do we live out our baptismal call in obedience to Christ as he did to the Father? Our rebirth by water and the Spirit fills us with the life of God himself and unites us to the Holy Trinity. Do we accept or reject this life by our thoughts and actions each day? Are we living just as he lived?

Following his baptism, Jesus entered a time of solitude in the desert for forty days. This special time of prayer and fasting gives him strength to resist the temptations of Satan, and to embark on his mission of redemption. Again, we must ask the question, are we following Christ's example? Does our prayer and fasting, especially during the forty days of Lent, enable us to resist the same temptations of the devil which Jesus encountered? Do we humble ourselves, relying on

God's Word to strengthen us and fulfill the purpose for which we were created? Or do we succumb to the same temptations of power and wealth which Jesus faced. Those temptations, and many others, which can enslave us to sin and lead us on the path to destruction?



"This is the time of fulfillment, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15) As Jesus begins his ministry and proclaims the coming of the kingdom, he begins to call all people to himself. By repentance and belief, we experience deep, personal conversion. We enter into that mysterious communion which binds us all and draws us into Christ's own body, the Church. He declares as "blessed" those who enter into this kingdom through their humility and meekness, their mourning and mercy, and their hunger and thirst for righteousness. The clean of heart, the peacemakers and those persecuted for his sake will all see God in his glory and experience his blessed peace. Are we that salt of the earth and light of the world that will experience his presence and draw others into the kingdom as well?

Jesus performed many "mighty works and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22) which manifested the kingdom and invited faith in him. He freed many from the physical evils of hunger, illness and death itself. Even in the midst of these signs, some still reject him and even accuse him of demonic actions (Mk 3:22) He does not come to abolish all of the evils in our world. But for those who accept his Lordship over their lives, he will give freedom from the greatest evil of all, sin itself. Do we accept his Lordship in our lives and repent of our sinfulness, seeking the spiritual healing which we all need?

As the time of his supreme sacrifice approaches, Jesus prepares those close to him for his departure. He

gives authority to his chosen twelve, who will carry on his mission and spread the gospel to the multitudes. Peter is singled out and given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven..." and the power to bind and loose. (Matt 16:19) This power is then entrusted to all of the apostles, with Peter as their leader, and their many successors throughout the centuries. It is the power to forgive sins, pronounce judgments and lead his Church so that the "gates of Hades will not prevail against it". (Matt 16:18) Before Christ's final messianic entry into Jerusalem, he tries to explain to the apostles the path of suffering and death which lays ahead before his resurrection on the third day.

(Matt 16:21) This is not a message they are ready to hear. It does not fit in with their visions of the Kingdom. To strengthen them, he gives Peter, James and John a glimpse of his divine glory at the transfiguration. But after this brief vision of his transformation, they must once again come down the mountain and face the ultimate trials of life. Jesus will leave them and us with a foretaste of that heavenly glory in the Holy Eucharist, which he institutes at the Last Supper. His own body, blood, soul and divinity will give us the strength and hope we need to survive in this valley of life, this "vale of tears" before we ascend to our own final resurrection. Do these mysteries of Christ's life make a difference in our lives? What is our vision of the Kingdom in the here and now? As we ponder this let us pray for the grace to understand and live out the mysteries we encounter in our own lives each day. Let us always strive to grow in our faith in Jesus and as St. John proclaims, to "live as he lived"!

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

The way we may be sure *that* we know him is to keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: whoever claims to abide in him ought to live (just) as he lived." (1John2:3-6)

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw

the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; 17 and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, * with whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:13-17)

"The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him." (Mark 1:12,13)

"And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who takes no offense at me." (Matt 11:4-6)

"And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them



out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.

.." (Matt 10:1)

"He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16* Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18* And I tell you, you are Peter, * and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:15-19)

SACRED TRADITION

"Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and "walk in newness of life" (CCC 537)

"...Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man"

to take back his plunder. Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father." (CCC 539)

"Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents." (CCC 545)

"The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfillment of Revelation" (John Paul II, CT 9). (CCC 561)

Thoughtful Questions

How many of the following aids and opportunities for spiritual growth are we taking advantage of in our lives right now?

Sacred Scripture and other spiritual reading.

Daily prayer.

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Eucharistic adoration.

Sacrificial giving and serving

Daily Mass

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Fasting

Friday Pen-