



MARIST VOCATION YEAR

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Deepening our friendship with Jesus

- Asking for an interior knowledge of Christ who for me became man in order to love him more and make him loved and served. (cf. Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola)
- Let us be touched when we realize that Christ has made us joint heirs with him, he is the eldest of a multitude of sisters and brothers. Let us welcome into the hollow of our hearts these words of adoption from the Heavenly Father: "*You are my daughter, my son, you have all my love*".
- Let yourself be led by God, let yourself be educated by the Holy Spirit.
- Pray more for missionary vocations in the Society of Mary and whole catholic church.
- Engage in daily life to announce the Good News by testimony of life and good deeds for the greater Glory of God and the honour of Mary.

Imitate the virtues of our Lord (Secuela Christi)

- Look at Jesus in the crowd.
- He's waiting his turn like the others.
- One among others without prerogatives or privileges.
- He occupies the humble place from the baptism in the Jordan River until the washing of the feet.

Louis Niyongabo, s.m.

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, Our Own Baptism and the Missionary Mandate

The communication that we are going to make will follow three stages. First the baptism of Jesus and its meaning, then we will talk about our baptism as ordinary and religious Christians. Finally we will share on the implications of baptism in terms of the duties of the baptized and the missionary mandate.

1. The baptism of the Lord

Three synoptic gospels record the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan. We find it in Matthew 3, 13-17; Mark 1, 9-11; Luke 3, 21-22.

Let's take Mark's story, which is the more primitive of the other two. *"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth, a city of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens tear apart and the Spirit descend upon him like a dove. There was a voice from heaven: 'You are my beloved Son; in you I find my joy'".* (Mk 1, 9-11)

1.1. What does this baptism of Jesus mean for us Christians and Marists?

The immersion of Jesus in the Jordan as it is described by Saint Mark has a connection with the sin of humanity. The theology that is developing within Christianity sees in the baptism of Jesus a will of Jesus Christ to take charge of the sin of the world.

If Jesus is the son of God, the holy of holies, why is he baptized like everyone else? The answer to this question is found in the Gospels. They say that at the baptism of Jesus, heaven opens. This means that the link between God and men is reestablished. The proof: the Spirit descends on Jesus. Now the Kingdom is among men, the son can reveal the true face of God. The voice of the Father testifies on behalf of the Son: *"you are my beloved Son, in you I find my joy!"* The baptism of water received by Jesus then makes sense: it prefigures the hour of the cross when, out of love for us and in trust in his Father, Jesus will cross the waters of death and sin to make us live on his divine life.

A French theologian explains even better the meaning of this baptism: *"Jesus does not need the baptism of John the Baptist, which was a sign of repentance, he who is without sin, nor of a gift of the Spirit, since he is the Son of God since always and therefore possesses the Spirit in fullness. But, by this sign, Jesus is united with us and gives us the gift of baptism: it is He who baptizes in the Spirit so that we may be "one" with him in his resurrected humanity."* (Bernasseau, 2020)

1.2. Baptism of solidarity

Jesus' baptism of solidarity strengthens us and validates our baptism which cleanses us from original sin. Solidarity according to the Latin etymology "solidus" means: whole, consistent, bond between them the debtors of a sum. Solidarity is the feeling of responsibility and reciprocal dependence within a group of people who are morally obligated to each other. The baptism of Jesus makes us, who are sinners from the womb, strong and responsible. His baptism makes us sons of the same Father called to build, in solidarity, the Kingdom where all are one.

2. The baptism of the Christian, duties of the baptized and missionary mandate

According to the catechism of the Catholic Church: to baptize (in Greek *baptizein*) means to dive, to immerse; the diving in water symbolizes the burial of the catechumen in the death of Christ from which he leaves by the resurrection with him as "new creature." (CCC 1214). This sacrament is also called "the bath of regeneration and renovation in the Holy Spirit" (Tt 3:5), because it signifies and brings about this birth of water and of the Spirit - without which "no one can enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn 3,5). (CCC.1215) - Baptism makes us priests, prophets and kings like Christ. By baptism the Christian receives the missionary mandate from Christ himself. "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you every day, until the end of the world" (Mt 28, 19-20).

The missionary mandate given to the baptized is inherent in the history of the Church. We are called to bear witness to the hope that dwells in us. As Saint Paul says: "Faith is born of what we hear; and what is heard is the word of Christ." (Rm 10:17). Now, for there to be listening, there must be messengers who proclaim this Good News. To be a Christian and a Marist is to put our hand to the plow and set out to follow Christ.

Speaking to Marists engaged in the education of young people in 1842, Colin he said, *"I would like all Marists to be like lamps burning brightly. Prepare yourself well in your solitude. We must draw on the fire of charity in the heart of Jesus and in the heart of Mary."* (Founder Speaks, Doc.49, &1.)

Conclusion and resolutions

The time of baptism that we have received in the name of Jesus configures us to Christ the King, Priest and Prophet. We are therefore free and responsible and Jesus is counting on us to continue building the Kingdom of God. The missionary mandate that Jesus left with the apostles continues due to the commitment of each baptized person. Ultimately it is up to us to: