

Mt 3:1-12; Isa 11:1-10; Rom 15:4-9 Repent and Change and Repeat

Long ago in days of yore (700 BC) the prophet Isaiah foretold: *A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths* (Mt 3:3).

That was John the Baptist. He cried out in the desert: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* (Mt 3:2). He was harsh and confrontational. Yet the people flocked to him, to be baptized by him (Mt 3:5-6). Why?

It was his profound love for God. His love for God revealed how much God loves us. God loves us so much He was coming into this world to save us. So get prepared and repent. But only if you are willing to change.

John the Baptist had no patience for the Pharisees and Sadducees, *You brood of vipers!* (Mt 3:7). They assumed because they were children of Abraham, they were guaranteed a place in heaven (Mt 3:9).

But John said, *Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance* (Mt 3:8). *For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones!* (Mt 3:9).

Why is that important? It means we cannot just belong to some group like Christians or Catholics. We have to be active. We have to live a good life and do good works.

Because according to the Book of Revelation, good works are the only thing we will take with us when the Lord calls us to Himself (Rev 14:13).

John the Baptist said: *I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire* (Mt 3:11).

What is the difference between the baptism by John and the baptism by Jesus?

John the Baptist could not forgive (absolve) people of their sins. It was merely a preparation for the coming of Jesus.

Whereas the baptism instituted by Jesus is a sacrament (CCC 700)...

which through His sacrifice on that cross forgives (absolves) us of our sins and gives us a new life in Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1262-70).

What if we're already baptized? It doesn't mean we are going to stop sinning. We have to keep being re-baptized by coming to confession over and over again.

That is why Jesus instituted the sacrament of reconciliation and gave the apostles the power to forgive sins (Jn 20:23).

When we go to confession the power of Jesus' sacrifice heals our soul, restores us to a state of grace, and repairs our relationship with God and the Church (CCC 1446). It's like a second baptism.

What happens to us in baptism, confession, and in this mass? It was foretold in the oracle of salvation by the prophet Isaiah:

God promised a great king would arise from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11:1). And this king would be filled with the Spirit of God (Isa 11:2).

As you know, Jesse was the father of King David. And Jesus is that king who descended from King David.

And because we are joined to Jesus in baptism, in confession and in the Holy Eucharist...He in us and us in Him...then the Spirit of God in Jesus...enters and becomes the Spirit of God in us.

Like God promised in the Book of Ezekiel: *I will give you a new heart and... I will put my spirit within you* Ez 36:26-27). That is exactly what Jesus will do for us!

(1) Wisdom: Because Jesus is the wisdom of God who brought us salvation and revealed God's truth and love to humanity (Jn 1:1).

(2) Understanding: Because Jesus's gives us the ability to understand and share in the needs of others so we can bring them His love, his compassion, and His forgiveness.

(3) Good Counsel: Because Jesus counsels us, by His Spirit within us (Jn 14:26), on how to live...

...with a heart that trusts in God, with compassion for the suffering, living a righteous life, forgiving those who offend us, with a pure heart free from sin, always seeking peace, and unafraid to suffer for Jesus (Mt 5:1-12).

(4) Strength: Because Jesus is our strength...the strength we saw on that cross, where He faced immense suffering, betrayal, denial and abandonment. But by the strength of His love He remained obedient to God.

(5) Knowledge: Because by knowing Jesus, who is the way and the truth and the life (Jn 14:6), we know God and God knows us.

(6 & 7) Piety and Fear [reverence] of the Lord: Because Jesus' godly fear which we saw in the garden: *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will* (Mt 26:39).

Now all of this is inside of us!

And Peace: because by Jesus' death and resurrection our sins are forgiven and we have peace with God (Rom 5:1), peace with each other, and peace in Jesus Christ (Jn 14:27;16:33).

Let us pray: Come Lord Jesus we repent and we want to change. Wash away our sins and transform us into You.

Empower us with Your Holy Spirit and the peace of God so that every time we go to confession, every time we come to mass, every time we pray, avoid evil and do good works, we will give glory to God.