

# The Sunday Last before Lent “Quinquagesima”

14 February 2021

**Grace Episcopal Church**  
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**The Sunday Last before Lent, 2021**  
Quinquagesima

*Virtual Grace*

As we observe the next part of the story -  
**The Baptism of Jesus**

Organ Prelude -

*“Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam”*

M. Dupré

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

Hello and welcome to “Virtual Grace”  
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA.

Today we will hear of Jesus being Baptized,  
hearing the Voice of God from heaven,  
as the Spirit then sends him out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

It is the Sunday “Last Before Lent,” or as we used to say, “Quinquagesima.”

This Wednesday, Ash Wednesday,  
we will begin our own forty days in the wilderness of Lent

I’m Fr. Ed, the rector of our parish, and we’re glad you’re here in “Virtual Grace,”  
not knowing when our doors will be open again for in-person worship  
and the offering of the Blessed Sacraments.

It is our mission to aid any and everyone in whatever way we can,  
to spread the Good News of Salvation  
in whatever situation one may find themselves.

We are deeply grateful for all the help, donations, best wishes and prayers  
that have been offered to the Church.

If you, or anyone you know, are in any pastoral need at all, call me, 24/7.  
I am more than ready to come to your spiritual aid and visit - with a mask.

Let us always remember that our salvation lies only  
in our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, in this life and in the world to come.

## CONFESSION & ASSURANCE of PARDON

St. Paul writes:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*1 John 1: 8-9*

Let us confess our sins against God and our fellow sisters and brothers.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins through our savior Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen us in all goodness, ✚ and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

## SONG of PRAISE

### “Venite”

BCP p. 82

Come, let us sing to the Lord; \*  
let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.  
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving \*  
and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God, \*  
and a great King above all gods.  
In his hand are the caverns of the earth, \*  
and the heights of the hills are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it, \*  
and his hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, \*  
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. \*  
Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

The COLLECT of the DAY

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

FIRST READING

*Isaiah 42: 1-7*

[Thus says God]: Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Here ends the Reading.

GRADUAL

Psalm 29

- 1 Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, \*  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name; \*  
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; \*  
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

4 The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; \*  
the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.  
5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; \*  
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;  
6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, \*  
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.  
7 The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire;  
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; \*  
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe \*  
and strips the forests bare.  
9 And in the temple of the Lord \*  
all are crying, "Glory!"  
10 The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; \*  
the Lord sits enthroned as King for evermore.  
11 The Lord shall give strength to his people; \*  
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

## SECOND READING

*Matthew 3:13 - 4:1*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Here ends the Reading.

## MEDITATION

I have always been intrigued by the implied question in today's Gospel:

"Jesus, is this really necessary?"

As I suggested just a few weeks ago,

there was a deep and abiding relationship between John and Jesus.

They were more than cousins - they were spiritual brothers  
John and Jesus,

- + spent time together in a desert retreat
  - with nothing but God and God's word to feed them.
- + that following those days, Jesus comes to cousin John,
  - who has been preaching the need for the people of God
  - to return to God and repent of the evil they have done?
- + that Jesus looks at John and says, "Baptize me."

"Is this really necessary, Josh?"

And Josh says quietly in John's ear, so the gathered audience can't hear,

"Yes, John, you know it is.

"But Yeshua, you should baptize me, not t'other way 'round."

"It must be this way, John."

"Is this for us, then? Or for whom? For Him? For them?"

"No, it is necessary for me.

I need you to do this *for me*."

Many years ago I was presented for ordination to the priesthood.

I had two Anglo-catholic friends as my Masters of Ceremony.

I said to them as we planned,

"I want everything that can and should be done to be so.

I may not know or understand now, but at some time, some point in my ministry  
it will make sense."

So they worked with the Bishop convincing him to allow me

- + to lay prostrate during the Litany of Ordination,
  - offering myself totally defenseless to God's will;

- + to lay the hands of the weight of the Holy Spirit upon my head;  
passing upon me the Apostolic tradition of our faith;
- + to have my hands sealed with the oil of unction,  
so that as I visit the sick, and anoint the dying,  
these hands have been blessed.

We've been discussing in our weekly Bible Study -

in which you are always welcome to join -

we've been discussing St. Paul, the early Church, the Jews and the Gentiles.

As it comes to the nascent Christian community in the first century,

Sts Paul and James argue as to whether is it necessary.

Must these Gentile Roman believers in Christ

be circumcised first into the faithful, Jewish tradition, as people of God

before they are admitted to the Church of Christ?

Is it necessary?

No, Paul and James finally agreed, it was not necessary.

Were the symbolic acts at my ordination necessary?

Probably not.

Was Jesus' baptism for repentance of sin be required?

Certainly not - Jesus is the Sinless One, as one of our hymns states:

The sinless one to Jordan came, and in the river shared our stain;

God's righteousness he thus fulfilled, and chose the path his Father willed.

As a child, did he steal a cookie or two out of Mary's jar?

Maybe.

There is no record that those gather on the banks heard the voice of God.

Only Jesus heard this confirmation of who he is.

It was not a public demonstration,  
though other Gospels record that young Andrew witnessed  
and was sent by John to follow Jesus and to call others.

It was necessary for Jesus to fulfill his right-ness,  
and to send him on his ministry.  
And Jesus demonstrated to those on the shore-line  
that he himself would follow all that was required by the Law:

Here, in Jesus' Baptism is the beginning of Christian Sacrament:

"An outward and visible sign,"  
of something that has already taken place  
"as an inward and spiritual grace."

Just like a 4-yo boy who "wanted Jesus, too," when Communion was offered.

Or another who asked Grandma if he was Baptized.

"No. But go ask Fr. Erb if you can be."

And I said, "Yes, indeed! You get it, even at 4 years old - you get it!"

Something - God - already moved within,  
and now an outward action was desired.

May we too, be so moved within our souls, feeling the Spirit's presence,  
to do what needs to be done.

AMEN.

At Baptism and Confirmation, we use the Apostles' Creed.

Let us, therefore, proclaim our faith in those words.

The CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection ☩ of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS, Form II, *adapted*

BCP, p.385

We have divided the Parish Directory to lift up a portion of our family each week.

Let us pray for God's people throughout the world.

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Kevin, our Bishop; and for all ministers and faithful. Remembering those in our parish family: Bill; Carla; Marie, Sally, Emery & Ed; Sue; Miklos & Sebastian; Cindy; Kathy & Harold; Nancy. For Sue and Matt who celebrate birthdays this week. Pray for our parish family, and the faithful throughout the world.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. For Joe and Kamala, our President and Vice President, Tom our Governor, and Sarah our Mayor. Pray for justice and peace in our country, our communities, in our homes and abroad.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, those in prison, those separated from loved ones, for the sick, the elderly and those suffering from Covid-19. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the departed especially Jane, and those who have succumbed to the virus, and those killed by violent acts. Pray for those who have died.

*Silence*

I ask your thanksgiving for loved ones, and the creative ways they and we have found to share our love, especially in this year. Pray for our families wherever they may be.

*Silence*

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray the words which Christ has taught us:

Our Father...

*BLESSING*

Book of Occasional Services, p. 24

May God, who sent the Holy Spirit to rest upon the Only-begotten at his baptism in the Jordan River, pour out that Spirit on you who have come to the waters of new birth. *Amen.*

May Christ, the Son of God, be manifest in you, that your lives may be a light to the world; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. *Amen.*

Baptized in water, sealed by the Spirit...

Washed and Confirmed in who God made you - "You are my Beloved."

Hymn -

*"Baptized in water, sealed by the Spirit"*

Gaelic melody