

# **DAY 3**

**I - HIDDEN LIFE - BAPTISM**

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We continue to desire to *listen to him*, as he communicates to us his message, both his deeds-message and his words-message.

There is no gospel narrative of Jesus' departure from Mary's home in Nazareth. In that society of rural Galilee it was unusual for a young unmarried man to leave the home, especially in this case leaving his mother most likely alone. It will be helpful to ask Mary to help us get a sense of how his departure touched her heart. In all likelihood, she was by then a widow with no other support, as the fact that shortly after that departure at the beginning of Jesus' public life Joseph is not present at the Cana wedding would seem to support. The neighbors found it strange (odd?) that he should leave home to start a no-job adventure and indeed they thought that he was "out of his mind". Jesus himself must have been torn in his heart leaving Mary alone, but he knew he had to follow his calling in faithfulness to his Father, as he had done when he remained in the temple at age twelve causing Mary and Joseph deep anguish and as he would also do later at Gethsemane with an even deeper anguish in his own heart.

His departure from Nazareth takes him to the desert region where John was baptizing and there he seeks baptism in identification with those in need of spiritual purification. He sees his mission as creating a new Israel and in this conviction he re-lives in himself Israel's salvation history. In Noah's person humanity's restoration passes through the waters of the flood. Israel's liberation event from Egypt begins by passing through the waters of the Sea of Reeds and is concluded by passing through the waters of the Jordan to enter the promised land. In passing through the waters of baptism at the Jordan, Jesus re-lives that liberation history and in joining those who sought baptism he chooses to be like "one of us", like you and me in need of liberation.

The Baptist is overwhelmed by such **deed**, as he is given to recognize Jesus. It just did not seem to fit in John's understanding of his own mission: *I need to be baptized by you and yet you are coming to me?* Jesus' reply amounts to: *let it be for this time, this is the way it should be now.* In Jesus' words there is no denial of John's unworthiness. It is rather a statement that *your ways are not my ways* [Is. 55: 8]. Do we make use of our objective sense of unworthiness to "argue" with the Lord's ways? Paul [Phil. 2: 6] tells us that Jesus *did not cling to his being equal to God*. Do we not at times cling to our sense of unworthiness, to our **not being equal to God**, to excuse ourselves from responding to God's desire for us? John anticipates the words heard later at the transfiguration –*listen to him*– and he obeys.

It is at that point that the "voice from heaven" confirms Jesus: *this is my beloved Son*. After experiencing his heart's resistance to leaving his mother alone, after being considered "out of his mind" by his relatives and neighbors, Jesus feels deeply confirmed and led by the Spirit.

## REFERENCE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

### TEMPTATIONS

#### Mt. 4: 1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him: *If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.* He said in reply: *It is written: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."*

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him: *If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you" and "with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone."* Jesus answered him: *Again, it is written "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."*

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him: *All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.* At this, Jesus said to him: *Get away, Satan! It is written: "The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve."*

Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.