



# **JESUS CHRIST**

## *His Baptism and the struggle against Satan*

### **Texts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church**

#### **THE BAPTISM OF JESUS**

##### ***Jesus receives baptism from John***

Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan. John preaches 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins'. A crowd of sinners - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes - come to be baptised by him.

'Then Jesus appears.' The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, 'this is my Beloved Son.' This is the manifestation ('Epiphany') of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God. (535)

##### ***'The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'***

The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'. Already he is anticipating the 'baptism' of his bloody death. Already he is coming to 'fulfil all righteousness', that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. (536)

##### ***The new creation - the heavens are opened***

The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to 'rest on him'. At his baptism 'the heavens were opened' - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation. (536)

##### ***By our Baptism we are assimilated to Jesus***

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':

"Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him." (St Gregory of Nyssa)

"Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God." (St Hilary of Poitiers) (537)

#### **IN BRIEF**

- **From the beginning of his public life, at his baptism, Jesus is the 'Servant', wholly consecrated to the redemptive work that he will accomplish by the 'baptism' of his Passion. (565)**



#### **THE SIN OF THE ANGELS**

##### ***The devil's rejection of God***

Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called 'Satan' or the 'devil'.

The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: 'The devil and other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing.' (Lateran Council IV) (391)

Scripture speaks of a *sin* of these angels. This 'fall' consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably *rejected* God and his reign.

We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter's words to our first parents: 'You will be like God.' (Gen 3:5). The devil 'has sinned from the beginning' (I Jn 3:8); he is 'a liar and the father of lies.' (Jn 8:44) (392)

##### ***An unforgivable sin***

It is the irrevocable character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy, that makes the angels' sin unforgivable. 'There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.' (St John Damascene) (393)

##### ***The power of Satan***

Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls 'a murderer from the beginning', who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father. 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.' (I Jn 3:8) In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God. (394)

### ***His hatred of God***

The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but 'we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him.' (Rom 8:28) (395)

### **MAN'S ORIGINAL SIN, TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL**

#### ***Satan tempts our first parents***

Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, *disobeyed* God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness. (397)

Created in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully 'divinized' by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to 'be like God', but 'without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.' (398)

#### **IN BRIEF**

- 'God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living... It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world'.(Wis 1:13; 2:24) (413)
- Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God. (414)  
'Although set by God in a state of rectitude man, enticed by the evil one, abused his freedom at the very start of history. He lifted himself up against God, and sought to attain his goal apart from him' (Vatican II) (415)



### **JESUS' TEMPTATIONS AND HIS DEFEAT OF SATAN**

#### ***The new Adam Tempted by Satan in the desert***

The Gospels speak of a time of solitude in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels come to minister to him. At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him 'until an opportune time'.

#### ***The new Adam***

The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfils Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, 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. (538-539)

#### ***Christ vanquished the Tempter for us***

Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him. This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: 'For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning.' (Heb 4:15) By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. (540)

#### ***Jesus' exorcisms***

The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: 'If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.' Jesus' exorcisms free some individuals from the dominion of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over 'the ruler of this world'. The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: 'God reigned from the wood.' (550)

#### **IN BRIEF**

- The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father. (566)

