

MATTHEW CHAPTER THREE NOTES

On the salvation history stage emerges the unforgettable John the Baptist, whose mission is to call the Jews to heartfelt repentance that brings with it radical changes in behavior and thought. Jesus joins his cousin, so reminiscent of the Old Testament prophet Elijah, and launches His own ministry after thirty years of quiet obedience to the Father's will. The Trinity makes a startling appearance at Jesus' Baptism, as John shares how the baptism Jesus offers—a "baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire"—far surpasses his own.

All of this is packed in seventeen verses!

Matthew 3:1

John the Baptist is a significant figure as indicated by his appearance in ALL four Gospels. What do you learn from Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23? What is John's mission as described in Isaiah 40:3? _____

Do you know with certainty what your mission is? _____

"Jesus had a difficult family situation, with His mother scorned and gossiped about when she became pregnant without being wed. Jesus' family were immigrants for a few years. Despite all of these things Jesus kept focused on the Divine Purpose for His life. (Likewise), continue to pursue what your Divine Purpose is even while acknowledging past family difficulties, unstable family dynamics, unfairness, and other significant trials in life that you have experienced. Despite all of that, God still calls you.

Your Divine Purpose is specific to you because you are unique and specially made and gifted by God. Your Divine Purpose is who you are called to be....We need to be alert to what God is calling us to do. It is the overall action that you are given to do while on this earth. It is all about following the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our lives and asking God to reveal to us where He wants us to be and what He wants us to do for the Kingdom of God.... The mission is for the glory of God, not for ourselves. You will need the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish your mission.

Consider these questions to help you to discern your Divine Mission, and ask the Holy Spirit to come as you ponder each question:

- *What do you love?
- *What do you have a passion for?
- *What subject gives you energy?
- *What people energize you? exhaust you?
- *What do you hate and have a passion to correct?
- *What books are easy to read for you?
- *What would you do if money were no object?
- *What enemies are you willing to confront?
- *What are you really good at?
- *Where do you feel like you belong?
- *What makes you laugh?
- *What do you love to talk about?

- *Whose pain do you want to relieve?
- *Who are the people in your life that unlock your passion?
- *Whose voice makes you tired?
- *Whose joy matters to you?"¹

Matthew 3:2

What is the core proclamation of both John the Baptist and Jesus? _____

How would you describe conversion (or 'metanoia') in your own words? _____

"The Hebrew word '*shuv*' signifies turning from sin and turning to God. One turns from the rule of sin to the rule of God. Simply turning from sin is not enough. In short, *metanoia* is a conversion from one way of life to another, from one master (sin) to another (God)-and it's a conversion that doesn't end over the course of a life.

Baptism is a once and done thing. Once you become a child of God, that's it. There's no do-overs. You can sin and lose the gift of sanctifying grace. You can walk away from the Church and never darken another parish door. But you can't get re-baptized. It's once, for always.

Metanoia is different. It's something that by its nature happens again and again and again. Nobody is perfect. Everybody stumbles. And when we stumble, the smartest thing we can do is get up and run right back to Jesus-which is *metanoia*.

Moreover, the closer we grow to Jesus, the brighter his light shines in our soul. This light illuminates every part of our heart and mind, showing us all our lingering attachments to sin and calling us to repent of those attachments and turn to Jesus- which, again, is metanoia. That same light illuminates other things as well, not just sin but habits of life and thought that aren't the fullness of what God wants for us.

Metanoia isn't easy. We discover that while Jesus may offer us more joy than we imagined, he also requires of us more sacrifices than we ever imagined. We don't think that Jesus is ever going to ask anything hard of us. So often, all we think we signed up for is to love Jesus. Then we find out what that entails, and it's like, 'He said what?' Also, everybody has things that keep us away from conversion—power, possessions, influence—and we don't want to let go of those things. We're attached to them. Breaking attachments is hard.

Yet metanoia means God does most of the work; it is always a work of grace. This means, when it comes to repentance, God does the heavy lifting, not us. Sometimes we think of metanoia or penance as something I do, but it's more something God first does in me and that I respond to. Repentance breeds more repentance. The more we cooperate with grace, the more open we are to grace. The whole process only gets shut down when we stop it, when we say, 'This is the door I will not let you open.' At that point, grace can go no further.

God's grace is so abundant and so generous that it seeks us out, finds us, and wears us down. God gets us anyway. He's the hound of heaven. So, he allows our weaknesses to serve

¹ Oney, Deacon Larry. *Divine Mission: Discovering Your Hope and Purpose*. (c) 2017 by Hope & Purpose Ministries, Columbia, SC, pp 49-51; 58; 62-66.

this ongoing conversion process. He lets us wallow in our restlessness until we realize that what we're really seeking is what we turned away from. What we are seeking is Him."²

How readily do you repent? What obstacles tend to stop your 'turning to God'? _____

Matthew 3:11

How does John's baptism with water differ from Jesus' coming "baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire"? _____

"John's baptism washes away, while Jesus' baptism transforms. What John's baptism represents, Jesus' baptism achieves: The baptized person is purified, filled with the new life of the Holy Spirit, and made an adopted member of the family of God."³

Who is the Holy Spirit? What has been your experience of the Holy Spirit? _____

"If you allow Him, the Holy Spirit will lead you to a place of mercy, healing, peace, and presence. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a Person who will lead us to the heart of God. As you come to experience God's presence and power this very same Spirit will transform you and bring you freedom.....The Holy Spirit helped reveal who Jesus really was. How has the Spirit done this for you?"⁴ _____

What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit? _____

Book Recommendation:

Breath of God: Living a Life Led by the Holy Spirit by Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, President of Franciscan University of Steubenville, OH. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN.

Matthew 3:12

What does the imagery of Holy Spirit as fire evoke? How had the religious leaders not permitted God's fire to ignite them with love and burn away sin? What warning does John give to cold hearts? _____

"When you fall into sin, look to the eyes of Jesus, into his love and mercy, and get up."⁵

Matthew 3:15

Word Study: Righteousness

² Chapman, Emily Stimpson. Article: *Metanoia: Five Key Truths About Ongoing Conversion* in *Franciscan University of Steubenville Magazine*, Winter 2020, pp 13-19.

³ Cavins, Jeff and Sarah Christmyer. *Matthew: The King and the Kingdom: The Great Adventure Workbook*. (c) 2006 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 181.

⁴ Pivonka, Father Dave, TOR. Introduction of *Journal: The Wild Goose is Loose*. Produced by 4PM Media, Fairhope, AL, pp 1.

⁵ Fradd, Matt. Quoted by E-spirations/ daily email outreach of Franciscan Steubenville Conferences. Sept 22, 2022 online.

This term “denotes the uprightness and faithfulness of God and his people (Deut 6:25; Is 48:18). The word is part of a distinctive covenant vocabulary found throughout the Bible. It is used seven times in Matthew and 85 times in the rest of the New Testament. God’s righteousness is characteristic of his being (holy) and revealed through his saving deeds and care of Israel. God is righteous because he perfectly fulfills his covenant with Israel as a divine Father. The NT builds on this foundation: God now demonstrates his righteousness through the saving work of Jesus Christ. For God’s people, righteousness is a New Covenant gift from Christ. It is first given in Baptism and received by faith (Rom 5:17). It denotes one’s restored relationship with God as an adopted son or daughter. This gift of righteousness can increase through love and obedience to God’s covenant Law (Mt 5:6; 6:33; Rom 6:16; Eph 4:24; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 Jn 3:7).”⁶

In your own words, how would you respond if someone asked you: “Why would a sinless Jesus be baptized?” _____

What does Jesus’ response “It is fitting to fulfill all righteousness” mean? “In part, it means that Jesus’ baptism fulfills many themes and prophecies in Scripture. As Jesus comes up from the water, the Holy Spirit hovers as a dove and the voice of God the Father speaks. We recognize images of the creation story (Gen 1:1-2). The creation comes up from the water. So the baptism is like a new creation event, and, in fact, Jesus is the new creation. This reminds us of how Matthew began, with the genealogy, comparing Jesus to Adam.

The voice of God speaking at the baptism echoes a line from the ancient coronation hymn of the Davidic kingdom, the song sang when each new king mounted the throne. We know this hymn as Psalm 2:7. It’s as if Jesus, the Son of David, is beginning his reign and his heavenly father sings a bit of the hymn for the occasion!

But there’s more. The Father says ‘my beloved son,’ which harks back to a famous incident, the near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22), where Isaac is called the ‘beloved son’ three times. So not only is Jesus the royal Son of David beginning his reign but also he is a New Isaac, a ‘beloved son,’ who will go to the same mountaintop to offer his life in sacrifice.

Israel’s greatest king, Solomon, was washed and anointed at a source of sacred water, the spring Gihon, in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 1:38-40), by the reigning priest Zadok and the ranking prophet Nathan. Likewise, Jesus is washed and anointed at another source of sacred water, the Jordan, by the ranking prophet of his day who has priestly status from his father Zechariah, John the Baptist.

Matthew stresses two themes here: Jesus as King of Israel, and Jesus as the True Israel. He has to experience in his own person what the nation as a whole endured.”⁷

Cultural Note: One reason Jesus may have waited until he was 30 years of age to launch His ministry was that rabbis did not function as teachers until they had reached this mature age.

⁶ *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*. Commentary, Notes, & Study Questions by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. (c) 2000 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 22.

⁷ Bergsma, John. *New Testament Bible Basics for Catholics*. (c) 2015 by Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, pp 28-31.

Matthew 3:13

The site of John's baptismal activities on the Jordan River was about 25 miles south of Jerusalem.

Matthew 3:17

How does God the Father's voice confirm Jesus not just as *a* son of God but as *THE* Son of God? How is Jesus unique? Mt 7:21; 11:27; 17:5; Jn 3:35; 5:20; 20:17 _____

Summary: "Jesus' first words in this Gospel are his request to be baptized by John because this was in accord with God's will; it must be done in order to fulfill the divine plan. Thus Matthew explains how Jesus the sinless one could have received a baptism of repentance: It is in fact an anointing. Matthew's primary concern is to show that at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry he is publicly acknowledged as the Son of God. A new age under the power of God has begun, and in it all the plans of God will be fulfilled."⁸

Pray that God would baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

(c) Glenda Canfield, Sept 2022.

⁸ *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: The New Testament*. Robert Karris, OFM, General Editor. (c) 1992 by The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, pp 867.