

underlines that John's testimony of Jesus as the Messiah was not given from any motive of kinship or friendship or collusion, but as a witness to the truth.

The second approach may be an alternative, or complementary, to the first. The non-knowing of Jesus (οὐκ ᾔδειν) is ambiguous as to whether the John the Baptist had previous personal acquaintance with Jesus. However, that Jesus was the Messiah was only revealed to him at Jesus' baptism, when the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17). Whether or not John the Baptist had hitherto known Jesus as a person, it was at this point that he discovered who Jesus really was, the Messiah, the Christ. One commentator puts the wondrous event more starkly: "In contradistinction to that which John now saw in the Divine light, all his previous knowledge appeared to be a non-knowledge."

Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me; save the servant who trusts in you, my God. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

First Reading: Isaiah 66: 18-21

Psalms 116: Response: Go out to the whole world proclaim the Good News.

Second Reading: Hebrews 12: 5-7, 11-13

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him. Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord; you bring forth bread from the earth and wine to cheer the heart.



Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle C, 2022 Weekly Reflection: John the Baptist's knowledge of Jesus

St John's Gospel (1:30-31) records John the Baptist as saying: "This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptising with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." At 1:33-34) the Baptist says: "I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." Luke's account of the Visitation (Luke 1:40-56) tells us that John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and would have been a few months older than Him. What did John mean therefore by saying that he did not know Jesus prior to the time of His baptism as an adult? There are broadly two schools of thought.

The first is that John had literally not met Jesus until that day. Jesus lived in Nazareth in Galilee, while John lived in the hill country of Judah, probably at Hebron, south of Jerusalem. The distance between the two places is some 100 miles. As children there is no reason why the two should have seen each other. Luke 2:51 implies that Jesus lived quietly at Nazareth. John's formative years were spent in the Judean desert. As young men they may have met in Jerusalem since all males were obliged to go to Jerusalem for the feasts of Passover, Tabernacles and Pentecost, but there is no particular reason why they should have met at these very busy times. This literal understanding of John not knowing Jesus is accepted by many, including early Christian fathers such as St John Chrysostom who wrote: "John could not of course know Him, having lived in the desert. And the miraculous events of Christ's childhood, the journey of the Magi, and such like, were now a long time past; John having been quite an infant, when they happened. And throughout the whole of the interval, He had been absolutely unknown.... Chrysostom and others emphasise that this lack of personal knowledge