

Come, Holy Spirit, Dove Divine



Why was Jesus baptized? He had no sins to wash away. He had no need to repent.

Matthew does not tell us all the reasons Jesus was baptized, but some are apparent. He identified his beginning ministry with the ministry of John. He set an example for us of the importance of baptism. He took the opportunity to make a public statement.

But there was something else.

The baptism of Jesus is the only place in scripture where all three persons of the trinity appear together overtly. As the Son comes out of the water, the voice of the Father is heard while the Spirit “like a dove” descends. The baptism of Christ therefore was a time and a place of personal fulfillment for Jesus, where all of the faces of the Trinity joined in a moment of declaration of the pleasure of God.

Baptism should be a picture of that moment every time our baptismal waters are stirred. The pleasure of God should be celebrated as the Holy Spirit is newly indwelling another who been buried with Christ and raised to walk in new life.

Did the Holy Spirit appear with wings and feathers? Did the Spirit fly down, talons outstretched, and light upon Jesus’ flesh? As the voice of the Father spoke, did the Spirit turn a beak toward the heavens?

Or did the Spirit descend “like a dove” in a way that means that the Spirit effortlessly moved through time and space and made its presence known, symbolizing peace and beauty to the Son who was coming out of the water?

We may never see a dove swoop down to bless our baptismal service, but we should always sense the Holy Spirit’s blessing the choice of each new follower as Christ’s example is followed. It is a time of recognizing the joy of our life in Christ, the fire of God’s love for us all.

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