

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

We can all easily picture the scene of Jesus at the River Jordan. John the Baptist is holding court on the shore. He is calling out sin and people are listening. He is inviting them into the water and telling them to reform. In Luke's unfolding of the story Jesus, like others, was Baptized and it is when He is praying, the voice of the Father opens the heavens and the Holy Spirit descends. It is after the experience, it is after the event.

So often our lives are enriched by what happens after the event. The power of positive reinforcement changes lives. Do you remember when a teacher called you forth and said you were good at something? When that happened an inner spirit erupted with joy and you worked even harder. When a coach has incredible words recognizing your efforts, it strengthens you to sacrifice even more. When a spouse says you really listened and heard what was said, it speaks to becoming an even better listener. All of this positive reinforcement builds desire to go further, to do more, to stay on the right path. We are just past one full week into the New Year and many are dieting. Everyone wants to see results. When we do, it causes us to dig deeper. When the scale tips the other way, we tend to just throw up our hands and have another cookie or helping of potatoes. Seeing growth, seeing improvement helps motivation.

In the Gospel, Luke is telling us where to find spiritual motivation. Jesus, after the water ritual of John the Baptist has gone to pray. While He is at prayer, the voice is heard. While at prayer, the Holy Spirit appears. This is significant. If we want spiritual reinforcement, one of the places that will make it happen is prayer. In prayer we will hear and recognize, in prayer we will be overwhelmed and challenged, but most of all it is in prayer where we will find encouragement. We all want encouragement from God. We all want to know He is with us. On this day we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord and as we close the liturgical season of Christmas, we are given an insight that is to last. When we pray, we will find the reinforcement that leads the soul to confidence.

May we find each other in prayer, rejoicing in the Lord, our Savior.



Fr. John