

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom 6: 3-5)

So Jesus - the one who John says will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. first must be baptized himself. Fair enough. It s a little strange, I ll admit, but there is an argument that says you cannot offer something that you do not have - so; Jesus is baptized, and while he prays, the Holy Spirit descends upon him in physical form - and if you need help imagining what that moment looks like, the gospel writers ask you to picture a dove landing on Jesus

Have you ever seen a bird land on a person? Parrots on shoulders, Falcons on leather gloves - there s always a great deal of commotion; feather s flying and the human target trying to stay upright - the goal is to provide a stable platform - because if the human target is not ready or nervous or moving about, it can be disastrous.

A similar disaster is suggested by a church sign that a friend in Halifax told me about some time ago. She reported seeing a sign that, in addition to announcing the service times, stated quite boldly You will be baptized by the Spirit . We agreed that this didn t sound like a comfortable process - or much of a gracious invitation; more like an expectation or a requirement. A close reading of Scripture suggests something less rigorous.

Luke's gospel makes the baptism of Jesus something of a non-event. Sure, there are a great many people crowding the riverbank, but John seems to be the focal point - albeit against his will. Luke gives us a lot about John, talking about how he's not Messiah, but this is what Messiah will be like. Then our attention is drawn to Jesus, one of many who have been gathered by the call of John, now sitting apart from the crowd; newly baptized and praying. There is a heavenly voice - meant only for Jesus, but duly reported by Luke - that identifies Jesus as a much loved son.

And for the Baptism, that's it - except that Luke then makes another connection for us. For all who failed to hear the voice - to any who doubt the connection that Jesus has with the almighty, Luke offers (post-baptism) Jesus family tree. (see Luke 3: 23-38)

It is a little one sided; son of , son of , son of , but the point is to link Jesus to God in the most intimate (and culturally legitimate) way possible. So while his baptism places Jesus among the ordinary seekers of forgiveness and righteousness that have flocked to John's call, because it is an act of humility his baptism also provides a stable platform for the Holy Spirit - setting the stage for that spectacular revelation (You are my beloved Son ) which is how Luke reminds us that there is nothing at all ordinary about him.

So what, you might ask; Jesus *is* extraordinary - everyone knows that! Jesus has this effect on the people around him - he makes others more aware of the presence of God - more attentive to the voice of God - more easily able to discern the Spirit of God - and here, in his adulthood, is where those particular traits of Jesus make themselves known.

And because everyone doesn't know it - the task of the church is to continue to