

Lesson 2

THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD



John the Baptist was giving the baptism of repentance on the bank of River Jordan. Many got baptized by him. Jesus, the Son of God, though he was without blemish of sin, was one among them. John tried to deter him saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me”? But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:13-17).

Witness of John

The next day, seeing Jesus coming towards him John declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God” (Jn.1:29-34).

Jesus, the lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, went down into the river Jordan to receive the baptism of repentance in propitiation of our sins. The baptism of Jesus points to the sacrifice he was going to offer on Calvary in atonement for the sins of mankind, and his glorious resurrection.

Holy Trinity

During the baptism of Jesus the mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed. God the Son was there to be baptized. God the Father was pleased in His Son and declared aloud that this was His beloved Son. God the Holy Spirit came down like a dove and remained on the Son of God. Thus God revealed to us this mystery that is incomprehensible to human intellect. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit. Thus the meaning of His name Christ was revealed to us. The word 'Christ' means 'the anointed'.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the centre of our faith and of our life. It is the Holy Trinity that works in our creation, salvation as well as sanctification. Having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we partake in the death and resurrection of Jesus also. We are called to die to sin with Jesus, to be sanctified in spirit and to live in union with the Holy Trinity.

This is the truth that is revealed when St. Paul the apostle greets us with the words, “**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you**” (2 Cor. 13:13). During the Holy Mass the celebrant uses these words twice to bless the people.

When we sing the hymn of resurrection (udhānageetham) during Holy Mass, as we are reminded of the resurrection of Jesus we also remember heaven being opened during his baptism. What takes place here is the special celebration of the divine revelations that came to completion in Jesus.

The Feast of Epiphany (Deneha)

This is the feast where we remember the baptism of Jesus. We celebrate this on the **sixth of January**. The Church used to follow certain rituals at this feast. Based on these customs this feast is also known, in Malayalam, as *Rakkulipperunnal* or *Pindikuthipperunnal*.

Deneha Period

In the liturgical year, the third season, the Deneha period starts with the feast of Deneha or Epiphany. The prayer theme of this period is the public life of Jesus that starts with his Baptism. The Syrian word **Deneha** means **sunrise or revelation**. Jesus, the morning sun, rose in glory and became the light of the world through His baptism in the Jordan.

During the Deneha period we remember and celebrate the following mysteries of salvation: The Holy Trinity, the divine and human natures of Jesus, **His sonship of God, His self effacement** (Kenosis) and the public life of Jesus.

On Fridays of the Deneha period, the Church celebrates the feasts of saints. During this period the Church remembers those saints who, through their lives became witness to Jesus, the Light, and who thus led

humanity to the light of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Trinity. The last Friday of the Deneha season is dedicated to the memory of 'all souls'- who have departed in the Lord.

Jesus, The Light of the World

Jesus is the light of the world. The Apostle John reveals Jesus as the light that cannot be overcome by darkness (Jn. 1: 5- 9). Mathew, the evangelist declares that the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The people who live in darkness saw a great light', was fulfilled in Jesus (Mt. 4: 16).

In the Syro-Malabar Church there was the tradition of decorating cores of banana plants (pindi) with lights and singing *El-payya* (God is light) in procession around the decorated lights on the feast of Deneha, to remember Jesus, the light of the world. So the feast of Deneha was called as *pindi-kutthipperunnaal*.

Our forefathers used to have ritual baths in selected ponds or pools on the feast of Deneha, to commemorate the baptism of Jesus. So Deneha was also known as *Raakkulipperunnaal*.

John the Baptist who recognized the Son of God, called Jesus 'the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.' Let us experience, adore and proclaim Jesus as the strength and light of our life.

Let us Pray

O! Jesus, the beloved son of God, help us to proclaim you as our Lord and God.

Read the Word of God and Narrate

John 1:29:34



Word of God for our Guidance

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness”. (John. 8:12)

Let us do

Read the passage from John 1: 35-49 and write the names of two disciples who followed Jesus after the witnessing of John the Baptist.

My Decision

Like St. John the Baptist
I will also introduce Jesus to others.

Let us find out the answer

1. What is the witness that John the Baptist gave about Jesus?
2. What does the Baptism of Jesus signify?
3. How was the mystery of the Trinity revealed at the time of the baptism of Jesus?
4. Which are the two traditions that the Syro-Malabar Church had in connection with the feast of Deneha or Epiphany?
5. What are the salvific events we commemorate during the season of Epiphany?