

THE HEAVENS OPEN AT JESUS' BAPTISM

Ignatian Meditation Guides by Bill Gaultiere

Introduction to Ignatian Meditation

In Ignatius' 16th century approach to Scripture instead of analyzing a text, you use your senses to imagine yourself as a character in the story. Then you have a short, personal conversation with the Lord. Each reading is guided by a focus question below. In a group context follow the leader's instructions on what to share and be sure to protect people's confidentiality.

Background to the Text

This Gospel reading in *The Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius is in Week Two which focuses on following Jesus Christ. Our Lord did not need to be baptized for himself, he is the Son of God and had no sin, but he did it for us, for our forgiveness and example. In fact, at his baptism we discover that the heavens are opened to us—and they remain open! We're entering into the Trinitarian society of the Kingdom of the Heavens. Jesus welcomes us to stand with him in the baptismal waters, the Holy Spirit descends on us like a dove, and the voice of the Father affirms us, "You are my beloved child and in you I am well pleased."

Ask For the Grace

Dear God, my supreme and truthful Commander, I ask for the grace of insight and power to guard against the deceits of the evil leader and to imitate Jesus.

Imagine Scripture: Matthew 3

13-14 Jesus then appeared, arriving at the Jordan River from Galilee. He wanted John to baptize him. John objected, "I'm the one who needs to be baptized, not *you!*"

15 But Jesus insisted. "Do it. God's work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism." So John did it.

16-17 The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the [heavens] opened up and he saw God's Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him. And along with the Spirit, a voice: "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life" (MSG).

Prayer / Journaling / Soul Talk Prompts

1. Visualize yourself in the Gospel. Don't seek intellectual insights—stay with the imagery. Use your senses to see, touch, feel, and hear. What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with or are you a bystander?

2. Experience the story in the role of the character God led you to. Then talk with the Lord. What do you feel? How does this relate to something in your life today? What is God saying to you?