

Baptism and Disciples

11.—Preaching of John the Baptist.

1. For thirty years Jesus lived in obscurity at Nazareth, When the time was come that He should begin His public life, He commanded John the Baptist to come forth from the desert, where, from his childhood, he had lived, and to preach to the people. John obeyed, and came into the country about the Jordan.

2. Soon the fame of John's preaching was spread far and near, and great crowds from Jerusalem and Judea came to him by the banks of the Jordan. Here they saw a man of most austere manners, with a leathern girdle round his waist, whose food was the wild locust, and whose cry was, "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Many were baptized, confessing their sins.

3. When John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees amongst the multitudes that came to hear him, he cried out to them: "Do penance, and trust not to your descent from Abraham, for the axe is about to be laid to the root of the tree."

John the Baptist made a great impression on his hearers, and many thought he was the Messiah. But he said he was not; on the contrary, he was but the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

12.—Jesus is Baptized and Tempted.

1. Jesus also came to John, at the Jordan, to be baptized. At first John refused, saying he was not worthy to do so great an act. But when Christ bade him do it, that thereby "they might fulfil all justice," John yielded, and baptized Jesus. Immediately the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, and rested on Jesus, whilst a voice from heaven was heard, saying: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. After His Baptism Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, there to be tempted by the devil. After He had fasted forty days and forty nights, the devil came to Him, and strove to persuade Him, as a proof of His divinity, to turn the stones into bread; but Jesus would not.

3. Again the devil dared to tempt Him, by carrying Him to Jerusalem, where he placed Him on the

pinnacle of the Temple, telling Him to cast Himself down: "For if He were the Son of God the angels would protect Him." But Jesus said, "Tempt not the Lord thy God."

4. A third time Satan came, and, carrying Jesus Christ up into a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth, promising to give them to Him, if He would fall down and adore him. But Jesus, with a holy anger, bade him "Begone, for the Lord only should be adored." Then Satan left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him.

In the deluge, water cleansed the world from its corruptions; in Baptism, water cleanses the soul from its sin.

13.—Jesus the Lamb of God.

1. Some time after His Baptism, Jesus came into the country where John was baptizing. When John saw Him, pointing to Him, he exclaimed: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. This is He of whom I have already spoken when I said, 'There is one who will come after me, who is preferred before me;' and He is the Son of God, for at His Baptism I saw the Holy Ghost descend from heaven in the form of a dove, and rest upon Him."

2. Under the Jewish religion every day there was offered on the altar of holocausts a lamb to the Lord; under the New Law Jesus Christ is this Lamb of Sacrifice, that was once offered on Calvary, and is now tally offered in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

14.—First Disciples of Jesus Christ.

1. On the following day, as Jesus was walking on the banks of the Jordan, two of the disciples of John the Baptist, named Andrew and John, saw Him. They remained with Jesus during the day. Toward the evening Andrew brought Simon, his brother, to Jesus. As soon as Jesus saw him, He said, "Thou art called Simon, son of Jonah: hereafter thou shalt be called Peter."

2. The next day Jesus saw Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." When Philip had listened for a while he hastened to seek his brother Nathaniel. Finding him under a fig-tree, he told him that at last the Messiah was come, and Jesus of Nazareth was the person. At first Nathaniel was inclined to be incredulous, owing to the prejudice that existed

against the Nazarenes, but at last he yielded and went with his brother.

3. When Jesus saw him coming, He said: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." But Nathaniel's astonishment knew no bounds when Jesus told him how Philip had found him under the fig-tree, and how He had known him long before. Filled with awe, Nathaniel bowed himself before Jesus, and acknowledged Him to be the Son of God. Nathaniel afterwards became one of Christ's disciples under the name of Bartholomew.

15.—The Marriage at Cana.

1. Three days after Jesus had called Philip and Nathaniel to follow Him, a marriage-feast was celebrated at Cana of Galilee. Jesus and Mary were there, as also the newly-chosen disciples. During the feast the wine failed, when Mary, coming to Jesus, mentioned the fact to Him. At first Jesus seemed inclined to do nothing to remove the embarrassment of the master of the house; but Mary, who knew the kindness of her Son, came to the servants and bade them do whatever He told them.

2. There stood six stone pitchers, each containing from two to three measures. Now Jesus came to the servants and told them to fill them with water; then to draw out and carry to the chief steward. When the steward had tasted the water made wine, he was much astonished, and, calling the bridegroom, chid him for having kept the best wine to the end of the feast.

This was the first public miracle Jesus wrought, and those who saw it not only were astonished, but believed Jesus was the Son of God.

3. It was at this feast of Cana that Jesus sanctified marriage, and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. And this change of water into wine was emblematic of that still greater change in the Sacrifice of the Mass, where wine is changed into the blood of Jesus Christ.