

13. 1. 68  
12. 1. 78 ✓

Les Anjos (Angels)  
[PLEASE FOR FEAST OF ANGELS]  
Laudans: Angi John 1<sup>29-34</sup> (PVC p 20 E.)

Before Christmas, John the Baptist, the man and his mission in life, was prominent in the scripture readings for the season of Advent, preparing for the coming of Christ. [Today, <sup>Now, following</sup> a week after] Epiphany, St John appears again; this time it's the actual occasion of his meeting with Christ at the Jordan that we're thinking about. The man whose way John had prepared, whom he'd been talking about as he preached <sup>repentance</sup> and baptized in water as a sign of that repentance, that man now stands before him. John's work and function, as the last prophet of the old covenant times, has reached its climax: from now on, Jesus, who's just beginning His life of public teaching and preaching, takes over to bring the power & spirit of God into men's lives - he wd. bring, as John said, a new kind of baptism, baptism of the Spirit, and John's own role wd. be subordinate to His. This meeting marks the formal beginning of Christ's public work - John points him out as 'He who takes away the sins of the world': taking them on himself. He wd., in His own person by suffering & death, give His own life openly & publicly to reconcile all men with God. The Lamb of God, John called Him: the only innocent man, the only man without any sin, He came to share our lot and take the burden of sin upon himself to release us from it. It wd. mean, for Him, death on a cross, accepted in love and obedience to His Father's will who sant Him into this world because He loves so much the people He had made, despite their ingratitude, forgetfulness, their attempts to ignore Him, explain away His existence, discount

his importance. Christ referred to His own death as a Baptism with which He had to be baptized. Through that baptism, the Holy Spirit was given to all mankind. The road that led to it, began with the meeting at the Jordan when He insisted that John must give him too the symbolic baptism of water, a sign of what was to come. When he recognized who was standing before him, John repented at first, because he knew this man didn't need any repentance for himself - Jesus insisted because He wanted to make quite clear that He was taking on himself the task of redeeming the world, taking away through His obedience, love and sacrifice all the sin of all men who wd. join themselves with Him. The baptism of Jesus was His dedication, consecration to the task He'd come to do when He came into our world at Bethlehem. He took it on himself without fanfare but with a deep humility, humiliation even, because He wanted to be one of us, to show us in His own sinless life, how we can live in love and obedience to God our Father. The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world: in His baptism scene He's presented in public for the first time, for who is really it, the Son of God. John bore witness to Him, pointed Him out for all the world to see. The revelation of God made at Christmastime to those who were able to recognize Him, is now made a public revelation for all men to see, and accept or reject. Let's ~~think~~ <sup>think</sup> & pray about this now as we listen to a modern setting (it's in Spanish, but that shouldn't matter too much) of those words of John transposed into a prayer: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, grant us peace.

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PRAYERS

Have you ever been puzzled by the story of Christ's life? I mean, by the division of time in it. All you can read in the Gospels, except for 2 chapters at the start of St. Matthew's & St. Luke's account, is about his preaching & teaching, leading up to a prolonged account of his passion & death & resurrection. The events recounted there could have taken more than three years (scholars now generally put it at less than that). What about all the time He was at Nazareth? As our Saviour, Christ seems to have spent a disproportionate part of his life in silence, in hiding almost: apart from one small incident, we know nothing about his life from the time the family came back from Egypt until He appeared many years later beside the Jordan where John was baptizing. They were valuable years: but the way God chose to spend them was the way ordinary men & women live, unknown to the world at large, living an ordinary human life with all its ups & downs, joys & sorrows, hardships, worries, pleasures, work and leisure. Nobody can now say (even if they ever really did) that God doesn't understand their life, their difficulties. Jesus has lived a full human life, and doing so showed that human life can be lived divinely - that there's nothing that can't be redeemed, can't be brought in bond with the love and care of God or Father. His life was a life of obedience, to God and to his human mother & father-father in the ordinary way of human family life. We may not know much about those 30 yrs. of Jesus' life - in ways, we don't need to; but they are years we should reflect on & pray about, if we wd. know how to live the way God wants us to.