

Fr. John's Homily

The Baptism of the Lord, January 9, 2022

We find ourselves ending our Christmas Season and beginning a period of Ordinary Time until Ash Wednesday. Christmas is celebrating the gift of God's Word becoming flesh. Jesus is the Presence of God with us. He is present to us in many ways, especially He is physically present to us in the Eucharist, on this Altar, in Communion. Epiphany is the Manifestation of God's Love to whole world. And as God's people we ask for wisdom to manifest, or show, God's love toward others; this is how we celebrate Epiphany. Now the Baptism of the Lord celebrates the manifestation of God's love in a very special way to all who have entered into the waters of Baptism. God's very presence, His love, now lives within.

This is the gift of Baptism. We have received this gift, most of us at infancy. Like you, I have always known I was baptized into the Faith. I claimed it as my own later in life. Even though this truth lived with me, it was not until an experience I had at 22 years of age that I knew from within my heart, I was a child of God. The Father, Son and Spirits lived within me. I was alone, but I was not lonely.

In this Pandemic which we find ourselves, both in our Nation and in our Culture, we all need to know this truth of our Baptism— God dwells within. We have God's Word, like in the prophet, Isaiah prophesied centuries before the birth of the Messiah who he would be and what he would do. He is the Servant of the Lord, the Chosen One who is pleasing to God. He will be given of God's Spirit to reconcile the world to God. He will be a light for the people, healing and freeing them from darkness and bondage. For the voice is crying out in the desert, make straight the paths for the Lord, the glory of the Lord is revealed for all people to see it. The Good Shepherd!!!

God, from the beginning of his ministry and throughout, affirmed Jesus as His Chosen One, His Beloved Son. Jesus would live in this knowledge of who He is, what He came into the world to do, throughout His life on earth. We see this on the Day of Jesus' baptism. The Father was heard saying: "*You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" The Holy Spirit ascended upon Him as He came up from the waters. From that day on, Luke tells us, that Jesus was led by the Spirit: where He went, what He taught, who He healed, and who He set free was all Spirit led, according to His Father's will.

In Acts of the Apostles, we will hear it stated that He went about doing good, freeing all those oppressed by the evil one. The one who is to come, is God with us, fulfilling what Isaiah said: "*God would uphold his beloved servant.*"

The baptism of Jesus begins His public ministry. It is the public affirmation by the Father of Jesus' relationship with the Father. *You are my Beloved Son, whom I am well pleased.* Jesus, by being baptized, was stating his public "yes" to the Father's call for him to be the Anointed Messiah.

As part of this affirmation the Father anoints Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit for mission. Jesus needed to know this from the depths of his being, not only is He God's only Son, but the Father was well pleased with His beloved. Knowing this from His depth of His heart, will help Jesus endure many difficulties and trials ahead. This truth would be what sustained Jesus throughout his ministry. No matter what he had to endure—rejection, condemnation, abandonment, a cruel death on the cross—Jesus knew that He was the beloved Son of the Father and that God was with him. This is what kept Jesus faithful; He knew who He was. Look at the Gospels and see how Satan would always attack Him, *'If you are the Son of God.'* Jesus knew the truth; He was beloved by His father.

Just as Jesus' Baptism was important for Him as He began His ministry, so too our Baptism is important for us. Like Jesus, it was the moment in time that the Father said to us: *"You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased."* It was the time that God made His dwelling within us. It was the time that God anointed us with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as this truth sustained Jesus, this truth can sustain us though our lifetime. Especially in times of difficulty and trials, we need to know that we are loved by God. *I am the beloved of the Father.* If Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, could endure his sufferings knowing this, can I not do likewise because I am the beloved too? No matter what we go through, what we are called to endure the truth never changes: We are beloved Children of God. If Satan would attack Jesus with this truth, will He not come after us in the same way. If you are a Child of God, don't listen - know the truth: You are God's child. There we will always, like Jesus, follow the Spirit's lead and direction in our lives. No matter what we endure, this truth will remain the same. ***I am beloved of God, I am His child.***

We give thanks to God for the grace of Baptism. We give thanks to God that we are his beloved. On this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we renew our "yes" to live as the beloved. We are called to follow the lead of the Spirit who is with us and in us.