

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

The Book of Genesis tells us that human beings were created to be in communion with God. But because of sin our first parents lost their relationship of love and communion with God.

After the loss God continued to invite us again and again to seek conversion in order to be in communion with him.

The first reading speaks about God's invitation to the people of Israel and for that matter to us.

"All you who are thirsty, come to the water...Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life... Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving."

Prophet Isaiah wants us to know that our returning to God in order to stay in a covenant relationship with him gives us the fullness of life.

Our reception of baptism is the beginning of our Christian life and our willingness to be in communion with God.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The Baptism of the Lord by John in the Jordan River marked the end of Jesus' early life and the beginning of his public ministry.

We know that John's baptism at the Jordan was only a symbol representing the interior conversion of sin.

Jesus did not need baptism because he had no sin. Yet he subjected himself to baptism to demonstrate his solidarity with us who because of sin have lost our relationship of love and communion with God. Also, he offered himself for baptism to show us what happens to us when we are baptized.

In the gospel we heard that when Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John, on coming out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him.

And a voice came from heavens, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."

Jesus' baptism was a turning point in his life. The voice heard confirmed his divine sonship. And by his baptism he committed himself fully to live in a relationship of love and communion with his Father. Also, by his baptism he committed himself fully to his Father's call on his life: to be an obedient son.

Let us also see our baptism as a turning point in our life by accepting our identity as Christians, as beloved sons and daughters of God.

Only in accepting our identity as Christians is it possible for us to continue to live in communion with God.

Let us remember that as beloved sons and daughters of God, we cannot do and live as we want. We have a responsibility to live as God demands, we have a mission to embark on.

So, let us allow the grace we received at our baptism and the grace we receive at our reception of the other sacraments help us to follow the ways of the Lord.

St. John tells us in the second reading that as people called to live in the love and communion with God it is essential that we keep God's commandments.

We read, "For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world.

John encourages us to allow the grace and the Spirit of God in us help us reject godless ways and the desires of the world.