

THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD; YEAR B; HOMILY HIGHLIGHTS

READINGS; 1st Is.55:1-11, 2nd 1Jn. 5:1-9, Gospel Mk 1:7-11

You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased

Introduction; today the church celebrates the baptism of the Lord, the door way to His public ministry. This is the event which made the Jews realize with certainty that Jesus is the son of God. Though some did not believe it, it has remained one of the strongest evidence in the scriptures that Jesus is the Son of God. There are several questions asked on this day, that if John's baptism was for the remission of sins, why did Jesus accept it while He was without sin? This question has received several answers from different scholars and experts. Today we should focus our attention on the significance of baptism to our life of faith and its aftermath.

Reflection; the first reading and the responsorial psalm of this day coming from the prophet Isaiah recapture the theme of this feast of the baptism of the Lord. Prophet Isaiah extends invitation to us; "all you who are thirsty, come to the water, drink wine and milk, listen that you may have life, seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near..." again the responsorial psalm we are invited; you will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation. All these good expressions of Isaiah tell us the richness of the sacrament of baptism and other sacraments of the church. The sacraments give us what we call grace and justification.

By the sacrament of baptism we are cleansed of our sins and given a new status of children of God. The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to communicate to us the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, CCC#1987. Through the same power, we take part in Christ's passion by dying to sin and in his resurrection by being born to a new life; we become members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself (1Cor 12; Jn 15:1-4). Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. On the side of man it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites us to conversion and to the promptings of the Spirit of God.

Baptism also in a special way gives us the Grace which is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life. The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and sanctify it. Therefore because of this special grace we become new creation, the old has passed away behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself through his beloved son Jesus Christ (2Cor 5: 17-18). Everyone who is begotten of God through the sacrament receives the status of beloved child of God. This is marked in us by visible signs of the sacrament which imprint in us invisible graces and sanctification of our souls.

Lord Jesus Christ we thank you for your graces bestowed on us at our baptism, strengthen us by your sacramental graces to remain always your sons and daughters till the end of time. Amen