

The Christmas Season draws to a close today as we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. His cousin, John, who had leaped for joy in the womb is hesitant to baptize. John knows Jesus is the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). Jesus insists and so John concedes to the will of the Son of God. Jesus wants the downtrodden to know that he has come for them. Jesus identifies with our fallen nature that we might more readily know God and accept his mercy.

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Lk 3:22). God the Father acknowledges Jesus as his Son. The Eternal Word has accepted the vulnerability of human life. Jesus has humbled himself in becoming human and being born of the virgin. God the Father also acknowledges the baptism of fire to come. Jesus will submit himself entirely to the Father’s will in the Garden of Gethsemane. Just as Jesus loves and honors his Father, he also loves us. At the end of his ministry, Jesus will undergo a second baptism, a baptism of blood as he offers his life on the cross for our sins.

Back at the Jordan at the time of the baptism of repentance, Jesus prays and “‘the heavens were opened’ – the heavens that Adam’s sin had closed – and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit” (CCC 536). Some amazing things can happen when we follow the example of Jesus and pray to God with heartfelt love.

In answer to the prayers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove. The Holy Spirit is acknowledging Isaiah’s prophecy: “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him” (Isa 11:2) and “Upon him I have put my spirit” (Isa 42:1).¹ A new world order of justice is dawning in which Jesus will “proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free, and ... proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19).

As Christians and heirs to the Kingdom, we are called to work for that justice in our world. We baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, becoming brothers and sisters by adoption into the royal family of Christ the King. With great power, comes great responsibility:

- Beloved, we are called to pray for those who are sinning. What a contrast to the confrontational world we live in where people would rather curse and condemn anyone they disagree with.
- Like Jesus who accepted the will of the Father, with confidence in him we too are called to make our petitions according to his will. Ask and you shall receive, knock and the door will be opened to you (Mt 7:7). Fr Juan shared a beautiful story about some handicapped children in Argentina who lived in a special home. Someone told them about snow, and they were very curious. At best it snowed once or twice a year on a year with heavy snowfall ... at other times not at all. One little boy had never seen snow ... and so with his imagination set on fire, he prayed to God for snow. He convinced other children to pray for snow as well. The following morning, in the neighborhood of the home for children, they saw snow for the first time. It was very localized to the neighborhood, but it showed the children God’s love and care for them. As the psalmist reminds us, “the Lord takes delight in his people” (149:4a).
- Jesus suffered death to help us see the light of heaven. In this world, we are called to share the light of Christ with others by our words and actions. Follow the example of Jesus and carry your cross. Unite your own sacrifices and suffering with his. “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another” (1 Jn 4:11).

At his baptism in the Jordan, Jesus wanted the downtrodden to know that he had come for them. Jesus identified with the outcasts. In a world where justice seems so elusive, we must

never forget the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus challenges us to love our neighbor as ourselves. And lest we become too comfortable with the neighbor we like, Jesus reminds us that our neighbor is the one who is suffering and overlooked by others.

Jesus' public life begins with his baptism. We too are baptized with a purpose and goal. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20).

¹ Gadenz, Pablo. *The Gospel of Luke, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*, P. 88.