

The Baptism of the Lord Homily

Before performing a Baptism, the priest approached the young father and said solemnly, "Baptism is a serious step. Are you prepared for it?" "I think so," the man replied. "My wife has made appetizers and we have a caterer coming to provide plenty of cookies and cakes for all of our guests." "I don't mean that," the priest responded. "I mean, are you prepared spiritually?" "Oh, sure," came the reply. "I've got a keg of beer and a case of whiskey."

Today we celebrate the feast of the baptism of the Lord. With this feast we conclude the Christmas Season and the begin the ordinary time of the liturgical year. It is the official revelation of Jesus as the Son of God to the world by God the Father. It marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It is also the manifestation of the Holy Trinity as God the Father spoke to the Son, Jesus the Son was being baptized and the Holy Spirit came upon the Son. On this day we're reminded again of the extraordinary truth that God, who is the source of all being, has become one like us, fully human, in every way except sin. We may ask the question; "Why did Jesus receive baptism?" As the Son of God, Jesus did not need the baptism of John because John was baptizing people as a call to interior repentance. Jesus is baptized not because He needs forgiveness of sins but because to show His solidarity with our sinful human condition, in our struggles and failures, helping us to make a new beginning. This is what we read in the gospel that Jesus associated with the sinners and tax collectors so as to lead them in a new way of life and a new relationship with God. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus affirms all that John has said of him and becomes the fulfillment of the scripture. In baptism it's not water that sanctified Jesus but he sanctified water and poured forth His grace making all water the future source of salvation so that all those who will be baptized by the water be holy. As Jesus emerged from the waters, "Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and a voice came from Heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" This is the manifestation of the son-ship and divinity of Jesus by God the Father. God introduced His Son and his mission to the world. God the father was well pleased to respond to His Son's willingness to identify himself with the vulnerable and show His solidarity with them. Like Jesus, we can encounter the Lord with greater immediacy and clarity when we place ourselves in a state of openness and solidarity with others. God wants us to foster that same vulnerability and openness in our own lives.

As we celebrate the baptism of the Lord, it is a good time to recall our own baptism. Our baptism is more than just a religious ceremony. It's both gift and commission for us. The baptism of Jesus reminds us of our identity and mission too. It reminds us of who we are and Whose we are. By Baptism we become the adoptive sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of his Church, heirs of Heaven and temples of the Holy Spirit. It cleanses us from our original sin and we receive a new and true identity with Jesus. God says to each one of us in our baptism, 'You are my beloved daughter, my

beloved son.' As we prepare to begin Ordinary Time of the liturgical year, let us experience the presence of God within us and acknowledge our own dignity as God's children and live it in thought, word and action so that our Heavenly Father may say to each one of us what He said to Jesus: "You are my beloved son/daughter with whom I am well pleased". Amen.