

Our Lady of Lourdes

The Baptism of the Lord

January 10, 2010

Readings:

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Acts 10:34-38

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Deacon Bob

As parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts we have all experienced how fast it seems that children grow up. Watching our children grow up to become responsible adults and parents themselves is awesome. We look back and wonder where did the time go? It seems to pass in the blink of an eye. On this final day of the Christmas season we experience perhaps an even faster childhood in Jesus. In today's Gospel thirty years have passed since last Sunday when the magi visited the Holy Family. Today Jesus the adult is being baptized by John. Christmas is a special time, a time of great fun but we are reminded today that Jesus was born for only one reason for our redemption. Today we renew our own journey with Jesus.

In the gospel Jesus is baptized. Jesus has no sin, why would he need to be baptized? There are various possibilities that have been expressed for his Baptism. By his Baptism Jesus is expressing his commitment to begin the work that he was sent to perform. Baptism is a gift in which God dispenses grace and Jesus chooses to receive this gift. Jesus sets an example for his disciples and for us that we too should be baptized. By being baptized Jesus identifies with humanity's need to be cleansed. Jesus' baptism was a symbolic anticipation of his passion and death.

Two things happened at Jesus' baptism. One a voice came from heaven saying, "you are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Jesus as one like us must have found these words of the Father very comforting. Is there anyone of us who does not like to receive approval and encouragement? We might ask "did I do a good job? Or do I look alright? Often times in the morning I might ask my wife do these colors look ok together? We seek affirmation in our life. We all desire to be accepted and to be loved. At our Baptisms each of us becomes children of God. We are loved and affirmed by God the Father just as Jesus was. Never forget this.

Today's feast celebrates the Father's approval of his Son. Think of Jesus' life. It may seem nothing like acceptance but more like rejection. We are told that even his own people rejected him and they put him to death. What kind of acceptance is that? Baptism is about dying but we must remember that Jesus not only went down in the water but he also rose from the water, a symbol of life. Jesus' Baptism prepares him for his journey and looks forward to the Resurrection. Our Baptism also prepares each one of us to fulfill our mission on earth, to be more like Christ and to look forward to our resurrection.

The second thing that happened at Jesus' Baptism was the Holy Spirit descended upon him. In Luke's gospel the story of the Holy Spirit begins even before Jesus' birth. Remember the words of the angel to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God." John tells us about Jesus, "I baptize you with water but the one who is more powerful than I is coming....he will

baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” The Holy Spirit was with Mary at the conception of her Son and was with Jesus as he began his amazing ministry.

That same Holy Spirit came to dwell in me at my Baptism. That same Holy Spirit came to dwell in you at your Baptism. That same Holy Spirit makes it possible for you and me to live holy and miraculous lives today. May be you are thinking my life doesn’t seem so miraculous in fact it seems very ordinary. I struggle from time to time. I don’t see any miracles in my life.

God’s work gets done by ordinary people in ordinary places. It gets done quietly and in the midst of the ordinary things of life, working, loving and even doing the dishes. The presence of the Holy Spirit allows this to happen.

A husband really messed up and hurt his wife badly. He said she was so angry at me but mostly hurt. There was nothing he could do to undo what he had done. It was like when you throw a stone in a pond; the effects of my thoughtlessness kept radiating out, affecting her and others and I could not call it back. He apologized many times and took steps to show that he was truly sorry. His wife could not get over the hurt; she just could not understand how he could have done such a thing. There was nothing more that he could do. One day a kind of miracle happened. She simply forgave him. She didn’t have to. She found it in her heart to offer mercy and forgiveness through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the love that we are washed in at our Baptism.

Wonderful things are happening in our midst right now by the grace of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit. At Mass the priest prays these or similar words, “Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Many of us received the gift of God’s Spirit some time ago. Perhaps we are not doing all that we can to harness that power. It is kind of like sitting in a race car with the engine off or in a dark room without switching the lights on.

There was a man named Andy Eddington who many years ago traveled for his work. On one trip he stopped at a café to have something to eat. When the waitress brought his coffee, he put three big spoons full of sugar in his cup while the waitress watched. He said “Ma’am we’re going to need more sugar for this table.” The waitress said, “Listen, bud! Before I give you more sugar you stir what you got.”

Sometimes when it comes to the Holy Spirit it may be like sitting in the race car with the engine off, or in a dark room without turning the lights on or not stirring what we already have. This week begins National Vocation Week. This certainly is a perfect time to pray for vocations to the priesthood especially in this year of the priest. It is also a perfect time for each of us to recall our vocation received at our Baptism, to be like Jesus and to love as he did.