

Sunday, January 11, 2015

The Baptism of the Lord

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

(Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7; Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10 Acts 10:34-38; Mark 1:7-11)

Jesus' Baptism and Our Baptism, *Our Sharing in Jesus' Relationship with His Father*

You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. (Mark 1:11)

“He wants to be the bride at every wedding, the corpse at every funeral, and the baby at every christening.” Ironically, the subject of this cynical remark was a world leader. Even though he often commanded center stage, he still craved attention. Deep down, most people do. To varying degrees, we're like those little kids who want someone to notice and affirm us: “Watch me jump! Look at this trick! See what I can do!”

Today's celebration conveys a message about this human craving. In fact, you might call the Baptism of the Lord the “Feast of Full Attention.” The spotlight is on Jesus, who comes to John as just another penitent in the crowd. Then suddenly, he is singled out as uniquely cherished: the heavens are torn apart, the Spirit descends, and the Father's voice declares him “my beloved Son.” What a stunning affirmation of Jesus' importance!

But here's something just as stunning: the Sacrament of Baptism brings us right into Jesus' own relationship with the Father! You don't have to strive for attention, wonder who you are, or question whether your life matters. If you've been baptized into Christ, what the Father spoke to Jesus, he speaks to you: “You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter.” Yes, you need to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. And yes, that takes time. But as you make that journey, you can rest secure that you are already God's beloved child. Everything flows from that.

Today, as the Christmas season comes to a close, why not give one last gift? Offer God your full attention, as you reflect on your baptism. Let him reveal you to yourself and show you how greatly you are loved. As you give God your full attention, you will discover how much you have his.

“Abba! Father! Thank you that I am your beloved child.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. *The Word Among Us* Mass Edition contains all the Mass readings and prayers, and a meditation for each of the daily and Sunday Masses.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. The first reading is one of several prophecies about Jesus in the book of Isaiah. How has Jesus fulfilled the prophecies described in the first reading? In what ways have you also been called to be “a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness”?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, we are invited to “give to the Lord glory and praise” (Psalm 29:1). What are some reasons from your own life that lead you to give the Lord glory and praise?
3. In the second reading, through Peter’s visit to Cornelius’ home, God broke through his misconceptions and prejudices towards non-Jews to reveal to him that the gift of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior was not just for the Jewish people alone (as he had previously believed), but also for Gentiles as well. In our society, we see some of this in reverse now, that is, there are misconceptions and prejudices towards Jewish people. What are some of these prejudices? What steps can you take to help eradicate these prejudices and promote mutual understanding between Christians and Jews?
4. In the Gospel, God the Father speaks these words to Jesus: “You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). What about you? Do you believe that through your baptism into Christ, you too are a beloved son or daughter of your heavenly Father? Do you believe that in spite of your weaknesses, and yes your sins, you are also pleasing to your heavenly Father? Why or why not?
5. The meditation also addresses our relationship with God the Father with these words: “the Sacrament of Baptism brings us right into Jesus’ own relationship with the Father! You don’t have to strive for attention, wonder who you are, or question whether your life matters. If you’ve been baptized into Christ, what the Father spoke to Jesus, he speaks to you: ‘You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter.’” If you were to hear the Father speak these words to you (in your spirit or in your heart), what impact would it have on our life? Take a quiet moment now to listen.
6. Take some time now to pray and thank your heavenly Father that in Jesus, you are also his beloved child (see John 1:12-13). Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a member of the NSC Council and a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>), a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the Military, Prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men** (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>), for which he is currently a Trustee. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com].