

Renewing our Baptismal Call: Living as beloved Children of God

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Baptism of Christ Sunday, 12 January 2025

The Feast of the baptism of the Lord is rich in meaning, inviting us to reflect more deeply on the mystery of Jesus' baptism and its significance for our lives. Let us explore further what this event reveals and what it calls us to embrace.

One of the most striking aspects of Jesus' baptism is His humility. The crowds coming to John in the Jordan river were seeking repentance, confessing their sins, and longing for renewal. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, had no need for forgiveness or cleansing, yet He chose to step into those same waters. Why?

This act is not just symbolic; it is an embodiment of Jesus' mission. By entering the waters, he identifies with humanity in its weakness, brokenness, and need for redemption. He does not remain distant from our struggles but stands among us, fully immersing Himself in the human experience. His baptism foreshadows the ultimate act of solidarity – His death on the cross – where He takes upon Himself the weight of our sins. In this way, Jesus' baptism becomes a declaration of His purpose; to bring healing, renewal and reconciliation to all.

For us, this humility of Christ is a call to examine our own lives. Are we willing to follow His example, stepping down from positions of comfort or privilege to stand alongside those who are hurting, marginalized or in need? Jesus shows us that true greatness lies in humility, in the willingness to serve, and in the courage to love without conditions.

The baptism of Jesus is also a moment of profound revelation. As he emerges from the water, the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, and the voice of the Father proclaims, "You are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased." Here, we witness the manifestation of the Holy Trinity – Father, son, and Holy Spirit – working in harmony.

This moment not only affirms Jesus' divine identity but also reveals something essential about God's nature. The trinity is a relationship of love, unity, and self-giving. This is the foundation of all creation and redemption. Through baptism, we are drawn into this divine relationship, invited to share in the love that flows between the Father, Son, and Spirit. Our lives, then, are meant to reflect this love in our relationships with others. We are called to unity, forgiveness, and selfless giving of ourselves for the sake of others.

The Father's declaration over Jesus – "you are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased" – is a powerful reminder of what baptism meant for us. In baptism, we are given a new identity as beloved children of God. This identity is not based on what

we achieved or accomplished but a pure gift of grace. Before we do anything, God declares us His own, His beloved.

However, baptism is not just about identity; it is also about mission. After His baptism, Jesus begins His public ministry, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, forgiving sins, and ultimately laying down His life for the people. In the same way, our baptism commissions us to live out our faith in concrete ways. We are called to proclaim the good news, care for the poor, work for justice, and be peacemakers. This is not passive identity but active, transformative call to be Christ's hands and feet in the world.

John the Baptist speaks of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire, signifying a baptism that goes beyond water. The descent of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of His Spirit-empowered ministry. The spirit leads, strengthens, and sustains Him throughout His mission.

For us, the Holy Spirit received in baptism and confirmed in the sacraments is a source of transformation and guidance. The Spirit empowers us to live as followers of Christ, even when it is difficult. The spirit refines us like fire, burning away what is sinful and drawing forth what is holy. This means allowing ourselves to be shaped by God's grace, trusting that the Spirit will give us the courage and strength to face life's challenges with faith and love.

Finally, the image of the heavens opening at Jesus' baptism reminds us of the closeness of God. In Jesus, the barrier between heaven and earth is broken. Through His life, death and resurrection, he bridges the gap, making it possible for us to enter into communion with God.

The Father's voice – "You are my beloved Son" – is not only for Jesus but for all of us. In baptism, God speaks these same words to us, affirming that we are loved, chosen, and cherished. This assurance gives us hope and courage, especially in times of doubt and difficulty. When we feel unworthy or overwhelmed, we can remember that our identity as God's beloved children is unshakable.

As we celebrate the baptism of the Lord, it is an opportunity to reflect on our own baptism and renew our commitment to live as children of God. It is a time to remember the dignity and mission we have received and to ask for the grace to live it out more fully. Are we living in the Spirit, allowing God's love to transform us? Are we sharing that love with others, especially those in need?

Jesus' baptism shows us the way: humility, love, service, and trust in the Father's will. Let us follow Him with hearts open to the Spirit, confident in the Father's love, and ready to live out the mission of our baptism in every aspect of our lives. Amen.