

So It Begins - in Prayer

Intro. This celebration of the Lord's Baptism is not about him being washed clean of sin and initiated into the Christian community. That is why *we* are Baptized. The Lord didn't need that. Today's celebration marks an event at the Jordan River that day – Jesus being identified as the Messiah and initiating his three-year mission. For us the feast is about our leaving “Bethlehem” and the stable today and going on the road with Him to Easter. I took my Christmas tree down Saturday. It looks sad on the curb. I really didn't want to let the season go. But it is time to move on.

I. It is as if we are late to the baptism. John has already baptized all the people and the Lord. Everyone is in quiet prayer. Luke doesn't focus on the *action* of John baptizing the Lord. It's on the

prayer and what happens during it: the Father and the Holy Spirit are present. At the beginning of his gospel, Luke sets the tone for how often the Lord prayed before and after important decisions and events [like miracles]. Luke portrays the Lord constantly communicating with the Father through prayer. It is certainly a call to prayer for us. In our weekly bible study, we discussed why the Father would say, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” Did the Lord *need* to know that? Did John or the people at the river need to know? Maybe the point was that the Father and the Spirit were *present* at the start of the Lord's ministry. Together they gave their “approval” for this mission. It was also the moment that John completed his mission. He pointed out the “one mightier than I.” He “decreases” as the Lord “increases.”

The Lord didn't *need* encouragement in the same way we do, but it seems significant that the Father and the Holy Spirit made their presence known to him at the start of his earthly mission. God was once again the genesis of new "life," [think of creation] fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament. The baptism was a sign to the people at the river to move on from John and follow Jesus.

Concl. Shortly after we entered the world many of us were Baptized, identified as a new creation and prayed for on our journey by the community of God's family. This could be a good time to reflect and celebrate our Baptism into the life of Christ. Families could find the Baptism pictures and after giggling over how young or old each other looks, talk about why that day was an important one for the family as well as who was present. Grandparents,

cousins and important friends often gathered for the celebration. It marked us as part of generations of families following in the footsteps of faith. Before we start a challenge such as a new job or a new life, it is nice to have the support and encouragement of family and friends. "We're praying for you." "Call if you need anything." "God speed." It is important to **know** and **feel** in our hearts the Father says to us too: "You are mine and with you I am well-pleased." We gather in prayer, not at the Jordan River but here and in our homes to be reminded of that. In whatever mission we're on this week, believe what the Father said, because it's true. **In spite of our mistakes, He is pleased with us.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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