

You Are My Beloved Sons and Daughters

Intro. We have to forget what we just heard. The Lord was *not* baptized. At least not in the same sense of our Baptism. The Lord did not need to be baptized as we were. (He never sinned.) The Israelites did not have baptism as we know it. They *did* have many purification rituals for washing hands and dishes. Gentile converts to Judaism went through a water purification rite. What John was doing was preparing people to meet the Lord by asking for a sign of repentance.

I. The people who heard and accepted John's preaching to repent were plunged into the Jordan River as an *outward* sign of their *inner* repentance. The Lord was probably in line with people (I can't imagine him pushing his way to the front) and as

John looked up at the next person, he was *surprised* to see Jesus. I can imagine the Lord smiling as he said, "Hello, cousin." Then John was *shocked* to recognize his cousin as the Messiah, the one he was preparing the world for. He tried to refuse the Lord. It was important John give in, not because the Lord needed it, but because it was the "handoff". As someone said at bible study, it was like John passed the "baton" to the Lord. John had finished his part of the race and the Lord would run the anchor, last leg to the finish line of God's plan. The second part of this gospel was the Father identifying the Lord as his Son to the people gathered at the river. It seems likely that everyone heard the voice from the heavens because it was an introduction, "This is my beloved Son." It is the same thing we do when we meet new people.

Concl. This feast is *not* really about baptism. The Baptism we know today came after the resurrection when the Lord commanded his disciples to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Mt. 28:19]. *This* celebration is about the Lord being identified as the Son of God by the Father and the Holy Spirit. As we will hear in next Sunday’s gospel, John told people the sign by which *he* recognized the Messiah was this moment and the Spirit descending like a dove on the Lord. It will be his last testimony; the Lord “increases” as the central figure in God’s plan and John “decreases” [John 3:30]. As the Lord started his mission of redemption he knew he was loved and supported by the Father and the Holy Spirit. For his human side, that must have been important to him. When we set off on a new

adventure, whether a new school, job or project, it is encouraging to have the support of family and friends. At each important juncture of our lives, it is good to know that *we* are God’s beloved daughters and sons. God may not always be *well-pleased* with us, but we are **always** loved by God. One of the reasons we come here is to be reminded of that; to be strengthened by the Word and the Sacrament; and to see other people committed to reminding the world that **love matters, not hate**. We receive the “baton” of faith to continue the race as St. Paul put it. May we take God’s Word and run well this week.

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