

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord: Continuing the Mission

Today's celebration presents Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan River. The celebration marks the end of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It is the only Sunday of the year that belongs to two seasons.

Why?

This feast belongs to two seasons because it is the beginning. Jesus accepts His ministry, His reason for being. This is the beginning of the teaching, preaching and healing that make up the public ministry of the Lord.

The ancient Christian witnesses see a great significance in this particular Epiphany or showing of the Lord. The words of the Father, the presence of the Holy Spirit, demonstrate God's action among his people. Jesus in his human nature has accepted the plan devised by the Father to care for his people.

How does this apply to us? Simply this: This Sunday leads us to consider God's plan for our lives and how well we allow Him to work his plans through us.

Most of us grew up with goals and ideal we wanted in life. Maybe we wanted to go to college and get a great job and then get married and raise a beautiful family. Maybe college wasn't part of it, but the rest may have been (at least for you, not me.) Maybe some of us wanted to enter into a life of service to the Lord and to his people.

As time goes on, we all refine our goals. Maybe a person does not just want to become a doctor, but wants to become a cardiologist. If you were blessed with marriage and then doubly blessed with children, you quickly wanted more in life than just to have a husband, a wife, or a family. For example, when your love became infinitely more than infatuation, you were determined to do anything, make any sacrifice for your spouse. When you brought your children home from the hospital, you quickly moved from wanting to have them to wanting to have the very best for them. Perhaps you hear about those who travel around the world routinely, and wish that you could do that, but in truth, you would rather provide the best for those who continually steal your heart and complete your life.

This is good, all good. This is sacrificial love. Your love of sacrifice for others, your spouse or your children is itself the very existence of God's love in your home, your little church.

Sometimes we ask ourselves a question whose answer is beautifully obvious. Why was I created? Or What is God's plan for me?

His plan is that you and I make a difference in the world by gifting the world with a unique reflection of his love that only each of us could provide.

You and I are not mere numbers in a vast planet of people, perhaps even in a vast universe of rational creatures. You and I are much more than this, infinitely more than this. You and I are Christians. We are lovers, Divine Lovers. We love the Divine and the Divine loves through us. We exist to love, to love God with our whole mind, heart and soul and to love others as God loves them.

There are people in the world who will meet God by meeting you. And with the grace of God, there are people in the world who will meet God by meeting me. These are people who are searching. They are searching for meaning in life. They are searching for reasons behind their joy and pain, their sadness and hurts. They seek lasting happiness. They search for answers and they rely on us, you and I, to help them find these answers.

We Christians believe that life is not just a matter of biology. Life is not just a matter of survival. Life is not just a matter of chance. We Christians believe that life, authentic life, consists in serving God by making the presence of Jesus Christ a reality in the lives of others.

That is why we embrace the work of the Lord until the last day we live. That is why each stage of our lives presents us with a challenge, a new way to serve the Lord.

We live for the Lord. We die for the Lord. We embrace the mission of the Father.

We do this through our vocations to the married life, to parenthood, to the priesthood, to religious life, or to the life of the committed Catholic single.

When we love others, we are continuing His Mission, for He is the Tremendous Lover.

When we develop and use the particular gifts He has given to each of us to make the world beautiful for others, we are continuing His Mission.

When those of you who are married put your spouse before yourselves, you are continuing His Mission to make love the motivation of life.

When those of you who have children empty yourselves so your children can grow into the reflections of God He created them to be, you are continuing His Mission.

When we strive to be the best at whatever it is that He calls us to do in our careers, we are continuing His Mission.

When we say "No!" to sin and "Yes" to care for all who are hurting, we are continuing His Mission.

When we make time to be kind to those whom our society hates, the

downtrodden, the socially unacceptable, the butt of jokes at school, at work, in the community, we are continuing His Mission.

When we respond to the Grace to do something for someone else, we are continuing His Mission.

When we realize with our lives that we are not the center of the universe, but that Jesus is the Center, and our center, we are continuing His Mission.

Today we join Jesus at the Jordan River. With Him we also accept the mission the Father has set aside for each one of us. And we thank God for making us part of His plan for His people.