

## Baptism of the Lord

A local church is doing a riverside baptism. There is a pretty long line of people waiting to be baptized by the river. A wandering drunk man sees the line, doesn't know what's going on but decides to join in.

When it is the drunk man's turn, he goes into the river and the preacher grabs him, holds the drunk's nose, takes him under the water, brings him back up and says to the drunk man "Have you found Jesus?" The drunk man says, "No".

Preacher gets a puzzled look on his face, grabs the drunk man and takes him under again, holding him down a few more seconds, brings him back up and says a little more forcefully "Have you found Jesus??" Drunk man says, "Nope".

Preacher is really flustered now, grabs the drunk and really pulls him under the water, keeps him under for a long time, finally pulls him up and screams at the drunk "HAVE YOU FOUND JESUS?!?" Drunk man is spitting and sputtering, gasping for air and when he gets his breath replies to the preacher "Are you sure this is where he fell in?"

Dear Friends,

This weekend we celebrate the Solemnity of Baptism of Jesus Christ. It is the end of the Christmas season. We celebrated a few feasts which showed the manifestation of Jesus as a baby such as the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the Holy Family and the Epiphany.

The readings today help us to reflect about Jesus' identity and our own identity. Most of the churches in the world accepts the sacrament of baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches this on Baptism: "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments" ( CCC. #1213).

In the first reading, Prophet Isaiah brings the identity of my servant, the chosen one which is prefigured to Jesus Christ. It was very clear that he was the chosen one. In the Old Testament, they didn't have baptism as we have now. They had washing and purification of sins. My servant is the identity given to all the agents of God whether it is a prophet, king, or judge. In the New Testament, it becomes the son.

In the Gospel, Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist at the River Jordan. It was a Jewish custom to cleanse themselves before the Sabbath. John preached baptism of repentance at Jordan. People went over and cleansed themselves. Jesus went to Jordan to be in line with ordinary folks. Even though he was sinless, he allowed himself to be among the people. He identified himself with every one of us.

In the scripture, Jesus begins his public life after his baptism. After Resurrection, Christ gives the mission to his apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit., teaching them to observe all that I Have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20). Today it becomes the mission of the church. So, Baptism gave the real identity as son of God to Jesus.

Through baptism, we become the children of God. The baptism of Jesus reminds us of our identity and mission. First, it reminds us of who we are and Whose we are. "By Baptism we become the adoptive sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of his Church, heirs of Heaven, and temples of the Holy Spirit. We become incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ. [CCC #1279].

Most of us dipped the fingers of our right hand into the holy water font and blessed ourselves when we came into Church today. *Why?* This blessing is supposed to remind us of our Baptism. And so, when I bless myself with Holy Water, I should be thinking of the fact that I am a child of God; that I have been redeemed by the Cross of Christ; that I have been made a member of God's family; and that I have been washed, forgiven, cleansed and purified by the Blood of the Lamb.

Today as we embrace a new year, I challenge you to think of a new way that you can share in your baptismal call. How will you share with others your faith in which you were baptized and became a child of God?