

Baptism of the Lord - B  
Isaiah 55:1-11;  
1 John 5:1-9;  
Mark 1:7-11  
Little Flower - 1/11/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of Jesus. The Baptism of Jesus marked the end of his hidden life at Nazareth and the beginning of his public life. Today's feast marks the end of the Church's liturgical season of Christmas.

In the New Testament, we hear the voice of God the Father only three times: at Jesus' baptism, at his transfiguration, and one other time in John's Gospel. Proclaiming Jesus as his Son at both Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, God the Father authenticates or validates him. As St. John would write in today's second reading, "*If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is surely greater. Now the testimony of God is this, that he has testified on behalf of his Son.*"

Today is also a day to celebrate our own baptism. When we were baptized, we became sons and daughters of God, members of the family or household of God. Today invites us to reflect on what it means for us to be baptized Christians and Catholics.

To use a human analogy, Jesus was God's natural son, and we are God's adopted sons and daughters. Last week, I quoted from St. Irenaeus: "The Son of God became what we are, i.e., human, in order to make us what He is Himself, i.e., sons and daughters of God."<sup>1</sup> If we are sons and daughters of God, we are necessarily brothers and sisters of one another. Therefore, we need to see each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. As a Church, we need to be a family.

After Jesus's baptism, he began his public ministry, which would culminate in his death and resurrection. After we baptize infants, we anoint them with chrism to symbolize that as sons and daughters of God, we are consecrated to God and called and empowered to carry on the mission and ministry of Jesus. We are to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to others; we are to be healers and reconcilers; we are to be witnesses to Christ.

Today's first reading suggests some of the ways we can do this. In today's first reading, God invites people to come to him: "*All you who are thirsty, come to the water! ... Come, without paying and without cost...*" What we say and what we do should invite and welcome others to come to God. We need to proclaim the God who reveals himself to be generous in forgiving. Therefore, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness need to be at the center of our words and actions. Finally, God's word is life giving like the rain and the snow. Our words and actions need to be life-giving.

When we reflect on our lives, I wonder how many of us ever ask ourselves how faithfully we have carried on the mission and ministry of Jesus. In other words, I wonder how many of us ever consciously link our mission as sons and daughters of God and our everyday lives in our families, communities, and jobs.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus' baptism marked the end of his hidden life at Nazareth and the beginning of his public life. Jesus' hidden life lasted approximately 30 years, ten times longer than his public life. I think this should give us some perspective on our own lives. All of us, but especially young people, can be too anxious to move into the next stage of our lives whatever that might be. We often try to rush our lives. Like Jesus, we always need to live in the present, living life fully every day.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Book V, Preface, paraphrased.