

Baptism of Jesus - C  
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11;  
Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7;  
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22  
Little Flower - 1/9/22

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of his public ministry. The Feast of the Baptism of Jesus marks the end of the liturgical season of Christmas.

The season that begins with the birth of Jesus ends with the baptism of Jesus approximately thirty years later. Jesus' baptism fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah in today's first reading: *"A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! ... Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

As I mentioned last week, historically the baptism of Jesus was included in the celebration of the Epiphany. There is no question that the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist was a manifestation, an epiphany, of the Son of God. As we heard in the Gospel, after Jesus was baptized, *"the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"* Jesus' baptism was one of only three times when we hear the voice of God the Father in the New Testament. His baptism then was a critical moment in his life.

One of the qualities that distinguishes us as Catholics is that we are a sacramental people. We believe that the sacraments celebrate important moments or meet critical needs in our life. Although Jesus did not need to be baptized, it was a critical moment in his life because God the Father revealed him to be his beloved Son and it marked the beginning of his public life and ministry. Likewise, our baptism marks a critical moment in our lives. We believe that when we are baptized, we receive the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that appeared at Jesus' baptism, and, therefore, become sons and daughters of God and members of the Church. Because we become God's sons and daughters, we are consecrated to God and share in the mission and ministry of Jesus. Jesus was Prophet, Priest, and Shepherd King. Therefore, no matter what our specific vocation, career, or job, all of us are called to be teachers, healers and reconcilers, and leaders.

Jesus' life is often divided into two parts: his hidden life at Nazareth for the first 30 years of his life and his public life the last three years of our life. In other words, Jesus spent 30 years preparing for a public ministry of three years. I think this should give us a perspective on our own times. In the 1980's, David Elkind wrote two books that were very important in youth ministry: *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* and *All Grown Up And No Place To Go: Teenagers In Crisis*. As is obvious from their titles, these books are about children and teenagers pushing or being pushed to grow up too quickly and not being allowed to experience childhood as a child and the teen years as a teen. Jesus' hidden life suggests that we do not want to rush our lives. We are called to live life in the present.

My brothers and sisters, today's reading from Paul's Letter to Titus offers us a beautiful way of seeing Jesus and a challenge. In this letter, Paul writes, *"The grace of God has appeared, saving all."* Paul is reminding us that Jesus Himself is the grace, the gift, of God. Later in this passage, he refers to the *"the kindness and generous love of God our savior"* appearing and saving us. Jesus Himself is the kindness and generous love of God.

Finally, he also reminds us that Jesus teaches us *"to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age."* To live temperately is to live a balanced life. To live justly is to treat everyone with respect and to live the Golden Rule. To live devoutly is to develop both our personal relationship with Christ and our relationship with Christ in the Church.