

Baptism of the Lord: Yr. B – 2021
[Is 42:1-4,6-7 · Acts 10:34-38 · Mk 1:7-11]

Whenever a major disaster happens in our country from hurricanes to forest fires, we often see the mayor, governor, or president standing on the ground amidst the chaos. What leader would not go to be with their people in time of need to express their empathy and desire to help rebuild? This is why we find Jesus standing in the Jordan River waiting for baptism with the rest of sinful humanity.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, and the first move that Jesus made in his public ministry was to make himself look like a sinner. Jesus' baptism demonstrates his humility and his solidarity with the human race. Pope Benedict wrote, "*[Jesus] wanted to make himself one of us in everything and ... truly joined the line of sinners; he who knew no sin, let himself be treated as a sinner ... to establish full communion with humanity. Jesus' action anticipates the cross, his acceptance of death for man's sins.*" Jesus' baptism, then, sums up his mission to heal and save us; in other words, to make us, said Pope Benedict, "*a free child of God.*"

The only requirement for baptism is faith. Think of faith as a telescope that helps us see worlds we could not see on our own, because faith opens us up to the life of God. "*Faith,*" said St. Francis de Sales, "*is like a bright ray of sun light. It enables us to see God in all things as well as all things in God.*" Without faith we would aimlessly wander through life with no goal in sight. We would be like a ship without a rudder.

We are wired for faith since the time of our birth. Think of how receptive young children are to the teachings of our Catholic faith and the presence of God. We don't have to prove God's existence to them, only develop their understanding of Him. Faith is not childish, however, as if we are being asked to believe something contrary to reason. Faith is acceptance of a truth based on God's authority, revealed to us through the Scriptures and the Church.

Faith calls us to an enlightened way of living. During baptism the priest hands the lit baptismal candle over saying: "*Parents and godparents this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly, so that your child, enlightened by Christ, may walk always as a child of the light and, persevering in the faith, may run to meet the Lord when he comes with all the Saints in the heavenly court.*" What parent doesn't want their child to accomplish great things? Being a saint someday is the best thing! Pope Francis said, "*Baptism is the best gift we have received. Through it, we belong to God and we possess the joy of salvation.*"

Like the waters of the Red Sea that swallowed up the evil Egyptians following the Israelites, so when we are immersed in those salvific waters, our old sinful self is put aside. In baptism, Pope Benedict said, "*Our life now belongs to Christ, and no longer to ourselves ... At his side and, drawn up in his love, we are freed from fear. He enfolds us and carries us wherever we may go.*"

Every good leader stands with people who hurt and are in need. Therefore, Jesus stood shoulder to shoulder with sinners to bring his light and love to those in darkness. Christianity is the only religion that boasts that our God loves sinners so much that he stands with them as their brother.

Sin obscures our appearance, as being made in God's image and likeness, baptism and every confession restores our image. Not only is Jesus truly God, He is truly human. He is the purest image of humanity because He does not bear the stain of sin. Christ came to restore our image and redeem our humanity. For Pope Francis said, "*Being Christian is not just obeying orders but means being in Christ, thinking like him, acting like him, loving like him; it means letting him take possession of our life and change it and free it from the darkness of evil and sin.*"