

The Baptism of the Lord (A) **Living as Beloved Sons and Daughters of God**

Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7; Psalm 29:1-2,3-4,3,9-10; Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:13-17

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are all beloved sons and daughters of God! We call ourselves children of God.
This identity is bestowed upon us through Baptism.

Let us reflect on this great honor by considering the Baptism of our Lord. Jesus came to be baptized not because he was a sinner but to fulfill what was said about him long ago. He was baptized to show that he is the Christ, the chosen one of God (cf. Isaiah 42:1-4).

During his baptism at the Jordan River, the Father publicly declares his identity, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 3:17). With this declaration from heaven, Jesus begins his ministry, performing miracles and showing kindness that prove he is the beloved Son. For example, when he meets the Samaritan woman at the well, he crosses social lines to offer her living water and share truths about God (cf. Jn. 4:1-42). The effect of being God's beloved children through Baptism is something we can follow: being strengthened in our identity, treating others with love and purpose, and sharing the kindness we have received.

We know John's baptism is a baptism of conversion, a sign of turning back to God. Jesus stands with sinners to be baptized, even though he does not need to change. This shows that Jesus is not only God with us but also a savior who shares the life of those he came to save. The Lord's baptism reveals who he is and how he carries out his mission. His mission is not about power or judging others but about standing with people and showing kindness. This kindness is not merely gentle or quiet; it is a strong, life-changing force that challenges common ideas of strength. Through his caring presence, Jesus brings new life and hope to those around him. His way is different from the world's, which seeks control and status. Instead, Jesus uses kindness to invite us to do the same, encouraging us to treat others with strong love and to feel God's mercy and closeness rather than his anger.

The contrast between Jesus' choice to stand with sinners and today's pursuit of status is striking. In an era when personal gain often outweighs community and empathy, the power of solidarity modeled by Jesus challenges us. Instead of seeking recognition, consider a public figure who, despite opportunities for acclaim, chooses anonymity to quietly support charitable causes. This act mirrors Christ-like power, showing that true strength and influence come from humility and selfless devotion to others, not from pursuing prestige.

Through our baptism, we are immersed in the life of the Triune God by the Holy Spirit and become Christians, meaning "anointed ones." The Father's words to Jesus are also meant for us, not in a voice we can hear but still real: "you are my beloved..., with whom I am well pleased." This is our identity and a lasting mark that brings us into God's family. Nothing can take it away, not even sin. It is as permanent and unique as a fingerprint, a personal identifier that time cannot erase. No matter what happens, this identity as 'beloved of God' remains with us. It is God's gift, not something we earn.

This gift of being 'beloved of God' grows within a community of faith alongside other baptized Christians. This identity brings us together and heals division and loneliness. There is no us and them but a family living with God. Like our Lord Jesus, this honor calls us to stand with those who endure poverty and suffering. Our journey with him, expressed in our loving care for those most in need, makes our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God shine.

Let us pray that we remain faithful to our calling as God's children and that the Father might call us what He calls His Son, "this is my beloved... with whom I am well pleased!" To embody this prayer in daily life, consider a simple ritual. This week, light a candle each evening as a symbol of Christ's light guiding your path, or sprinkle a few drops of holy water on your forehead each morning as a reminder of your baptismal promise. These small actions can remind us of our commitment to live as beloved children of God.

As we reflect on these practices, let us ask ourselves:
What one act of courageous kindness can I do this week that embodies the love and kindness Jesus showed to all and that reflects my life as a beloved child of God?

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