

The Baptism of the Lord (B)
(Isaiah 55:1-11 / Mark 1:7-11)
07.01.2018

You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you

Dear brothers and sisters,

Jesus' baptism by John in the river Jordan was a decisive moment in Jesus' life. That young carpenter from a small Galilean village would never again be seen in Nazareth. From then on Jesus would devote himself to a prophetic mission: to proclaim the good news of the coming of the Reign of God.

What happened on the day of Jesus' baptism? Jesus came to the river Jordan to be baptised by John the Baptist. John immersed Jesus in the river and as Jesus' head broke the waters, "He saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven: **You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you**". Jesus' head breaking the waters is clearly an image of birth. On the day of his baptism, Jesus is truly being reborn at the Father's voice. Jesus receives from his Father a deep knowledge and understanding of his identity: "Jesus is the Son of God, the beloved Son of God, on whom the Father's favour rests".

"You are my Son, the beloved; my favour rests on you". Jesus will meditate upon these words every day of his life in prayer. You remember that Jesus used to go apart early morning or late at night to pray to his heavenly Father. Through his prayerful meditation, Jesus will welcome his true identity. He will become more and more aware that there is a special relationship between God the Father and Himself. Little by little, He will discover that He is not only Son of God the Father, but that He is also one with the Father. Jesus will receive the inner certitude that from all eternity he was with the Father. Jesus is not only the Son of God but also God the Son.

The consequence is that, through Jesus, God's reign bursts into the world. Jesus, the Son of Mary, is also and above all the Son of God, God himself. Jesus knows and does God's will. When Jesus speaks and heals, it is God himself who is speaking and healing; it is God's will which is made known. In Jesus, God's reign is coming into Galilee and far beyond that region. In Jesus, God the Father is there bringing salvation and fullness of life to all those who listen to his voice and welcome Him.

From the moment of his baptism, and for the rest of his life, Jesus will hear his Father's voice constantly reminding him: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you". The Father's voice will remain day after day Jesus' inner strength, his lamp and his rock.

As Son, Jesus' mission is to reveal the Father's love for all people without exception. All people were created out of love by the Father in Jesus. In Jesus, it is offered to every human being to become an adoptive child of God. Jesus will remain faithful to his mission until the end, whatever the price to be paid might be.

During his first visit to France as Pope in 1981, Saint John Paul II spoke in Notre Dame de Paris and asked the Church in France: “France, what have you done with your baptism?” This question remains relevant for us today here in Ireland: What have we done with our baptism? On the day of our baptism, we became adoptive sons and daughters of God, called to behave in each other’s regard as brothers and sisters should. Our Christian vocation is to become more and more aware of our identity through prayer and to bear witness to it by a life of love, respect and service.

What have we done with our baptism? What are we doing with our baptism? Like Jesus, do we receive in prayer day after day the good news that we are children of God? Are we becoming more and more aware that God’s favour rests on us? God finds delight in our presence to Him. Are we present to Him to the extent we should be?

Are we trying to live as children of God should? Are we creating bridges between us in order to be able to live together and to help one another as brothers and sisters should? Or do we create walls around ourselves in order to protect us from one another, to hinder us from living as brothers and sisters should, from loving, respecting, forgiving and serving all those who cross our path?

Does our love for others become more and more inclusive? Or do we reserve our love for a few carefully selected people? We must ask if to love only a chosen few is really manifesting God’s love at all.

Today let us come back to the grace of our baptism in prayer. May the grace of our baptism be for us a second birth whereby we welcome our true identity, our identity as beloved children of God!

Amen.