

## The Baptism of the Lord – January 10, 2010 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Thus says the LORD:

Here is my servant whom I uphold,  
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,  
upon whom I have put my spirit;  
he shall bring forth justice to the nations,  
not crying out, not shouting,  
not making his voice heard in the street.  
A bruised reed he shall not break,  
and a smoldering wick he shall not quench,  
until he establishes justice on the earth;  
the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,

I have grasped you by the hand;  
I formed you, and set you  
as a covenant of the people,  
a light for the nations,  
to open the eyes of the blind,  
to bring out prisoners from confinement,  
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

### Psalm: Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

R. (11b) The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Give to the LORD, you sons of God,  
give to the LORD glory and praise,  
Give to the LORD the glory due his name;  
adore the LORD in holy attire.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters,  
the LORD, over vast waters.  
The voice of the LORD is mighty;  
the voice of the LORD is majestic.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

The God of glory thunders,  
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"  
The LORD is enthroned above the flood;  
the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

### Scripture Reading: Acts 10:34-38

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

### Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and 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."



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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

This Sunday marks the formal end of our Christmas season. Jesus' early life is now sufficiently celebrated. His public life comes next, and his baptism — today — begins it. I know, I know, Christmas has been over for ages now and we are making ready for Easter eggs or something like that. But the Church has good sense and lets us celebrate Christmas for a large number of weeks after it happens instead of just ripping down decorations and going on to the next thing. Good for the Church. So, what about Jesus' public life? In the Gospel we hear the voice of God the Father speaking to Jesus. This only happens twice in the Gospels, and both times it is the same message. "You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased" ([Gospel](#)). Who would not want to hear these words over and over? The beloved of God. It is candy and circuses and ice cream and all your favorite things. God has settled upon you as his special one. Everything will be fine.

Except that this is not the real meaning of Beloved. Let me show you in a story. I was visiting a Jesuit friend of mine in Washington D. C., Pete, who is a prankster. He was in the kitchen cooking up something, I forget what; maybe spaghetti made from scratch. Icky mess. I asked him for some kind of information or other and he said "I don't know, but we can ask Joe." Joe was another Jesuit who on that Saturday was working at his job at the Jesuit Conference building. My friend put the kitchen phone on its speaker and floured in the phone number. Joe picked up and my friend said "hi, how are you doing." Joe said "just great." Pete said, "how wonderful, since you are spending your weekend working." Joe came back semi-humorously and said, "No it is ok. God told me everything was going to be fine." Pete said back without skipping a beat, "Yeah, that's what he told his Son," I was on the floor laughing at such a funny, quick, piercing reply, delivered seemingly with no forethought at all.

Well, that is how Pete is. And it is also the way God is; not the jokester part, but the toleration of pain and suffering in his beloved. This is the other side of being loved by God. Suffering. In one way it makes no sense at all. Wouldn't you do anything to keep your loved ones from suffering? Yes, so would I. Then what is wrong with God that he seems to visit hardship especially on those he loves well? Jesus' variety of suffering begins immediately after he hears God's consoling voice at baptism. He goes to the desert to ponder what he has heard. He receives huge, slick temptations that beckon him to employ his newly discovered status as beloved in order to build up earthly power and honor. Directly and deeply contrary to his mission, of course, but God lets it happen. Why? God is like a parent watching his teenager's growing pains. Help all you can, but definitely do not try to stop the growing. Suffering and temptation confront us always, and they present the urgent need to grow, to broaden our scope, to understand better what love is, to see that love does not mean God taking charge and making everything alright but rather it means him staying with the beloved, continuing to love and admire that special one, no matter what is grinding him down. So this is what Jesus actually had heard at the Jordan. Receive love that never runs away, never lets go, even in the desert, even on the cross.

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. John the Baptist was the middleman. He pointed back to Isaiah and forward to Jesus, connecting the whole plan. What or who are the "middlemen" who connect you with God? In what way are you a middleman?
2. Jesus stood in line with everyone else to be baptized. What does this tell you about him?
3. Can you think of anything that God asks you to do that Jesus didn't experience in some way?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty, eternal God, when the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan, you revealed him as your own beloved Son. Keep us, your children born of water and the Spirit, faithful to our calling. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen