

Baptism of the Lord • January 9-10, 2010
Christ the King

There are two lines in today's gospel that caught my attention. The first is "The people were filled with expectation" ... The second "And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

Expectations and hope... Remember back to the expectation and hope of that first day of school. Most of us grow up with goals and ideas for what we want in life. Maybe we wanted to go to college and get a great job. Maybe college wasn't part of it. Some want to get married and raise a beautiful family. Some want to enter into a life of service to the Lord and to God's people.

Filled with expectation... hopefully that describes each one of us as we enter this new year and new decade. Today we celebrate Vocations Awareness Sunday. You may be thinking, well, that doesn't apply to me. Doesn't it only apply to priests and sisters? No, each one of us has a vocation. God has called each one of us; that is the definition of a vocation.

But maybe the word 'vocation' is too scary. So let's consider another question: 'What is God's plan for me?'

God's plan is that you and I make a difference in the world. How do we do that? We make a difference by sharing God's love that is uniquely reflected in each one of us.

We are not merely numbers in a vast planet of people. You and I are much more. We are Christians and as Christians we are lovers, Divine lovers. We love God and God loves through us. We exist to love, to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and to love others as God loves them.

There are people in this world who will meet God by meeting you. There are people in this world who will meet God by meeting me. They are people who are searching. They are searching for meaning in life. They are searching for reasons behind their joy and pain, their sadness and hurts. They seek lasting happiness. They search for answers and they

rely on us, you and I, to help them find the answers.

We believe that life is not just a matter of biology. Life is not just a matter of survival. Life is not just a matter of chance. We believe that life, authentic life, is found in serving God by making the love of God a reality in the lives of others.

Wow, you may say, “Those are pretty high expectations, can I do that?” and the answer is yes.

Let’s return to the second line in the Gospel that caught my attention. “You are my beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

That is the core moment in Jesus’ life. At that moment, Jesus knew his identity. He was the Beloved of God. In all that he would have to suffer and endure, he could say, ‘I am the Beloved of God.’ Others may leave me, but God will never leave me. I am the Beloved of God. That identity gave him the strength, hope and expectation to minister.

As Christians, Baptism is also **the** core moment of our life. In Baptism, we hear who we are too. We are the Beloved of God. You are the beloved of God. I am the beloved of God.

Think about that! You are the beloved of God. That is not what the world tells us. The world tells us that we aren’t good enough, smart enough, thin enough. Who should we listen to, the world, or God?

Hear again, God speaking those words: “You are my beloved. With you I am well pleased.” Wow, let’s hear it again. “You are my beloved” And nothing we will say or do will change that. We are the beloved of God!

This has amazing consequences and ramifications. First of all, it means that we are part of God’s family. We are God’s people, chosen and holy. So no matter how difficult and dark life’s circumstances may be or become. No matter what happens in our lives. No matter who leaves us. **We are the beloved of God.** Dripping wet with God’s grace, we are a living and vital part of God’s family. We need to remember, believe and

live by the hope and strengthen found in this, our identity. We are the Beloved of God.

But there is another amazing reality swirling around in the waters of baptism. Baptism brings us into community and communion with other members of God's family. It would be dangerous to draw this family circle too small or too tight. God's love is unconditional and God's family is vast.

In God's family, there is no place for partisan divisions or impugning the motives and character of other sons and daughters of God. Yes, we may differ on matters of theology and practice. No doubt, we may see our mission and life colored with differing hues of grace. But all of us, dripping wet with God's blessing, must remember that we are the beloved children of the same God.

Baptism should not just be seen as something that happened, once long ago and scarcely remembered. It is our living reality. We should imagine ourselves still dripping wet, with the waters of baptism,

Being sent from this place of worship and community into the world.

Being sent to bring justice to our own corners of the world.

Being sent to open the eyes of the blind.

Being sent to free those imprisoned.

Being sent to bring light to those in the dark.

Being sent to bring God love.

Hear again and remember, God speaking those words: "You are my beloved. With you I am well pleased."