

## **Baptism of the Lord (B)** **Christ the King • January 10-11, 2009**

Henry Nouwen (*Jesus, A Gospel*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY: 2001) called Jesus' baptism "the core moment of his public life" and the experience that enabled him to know who he was. In all that he would have to suffer and endure, he could say, I am the Beloved of God. Others will leave me but God will never leave me. I am the Beloved of God. I live by the hope and by the strength found in that identity.

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.

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 leave 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.

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.

So where does that leave us on this the final Sunday of the Christmas Season and the start of Ordinary Time?

We are left with our mission. Baptism should not just be seen as something that happened, once long ago and scarcely remembered. It should be 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 and remembering that we are the Beloved of God.

Being sent and remembering to be brothers and sisters to one and all.

Let's end with the song we sing at each baptism we celebrate, and hear it addressed to you:

Blessed be God, *O Blessed be God.*

Who calls you by name, *Who calls you by name.*

Holy and chosen one, *Holy and chosen one.*<sup>1</sup>

In part Adapted from © GraceWorks, *Dripping Wet*. January 11, 2009

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<sup>1</sup> *Who Calls You By Name*. by David Haas. Copyright © 1988, GIA Publications, Inc.