

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 12-13, 2019, Cycle C

The Baptism of Jesus puts the finishing touch on the Christmas season and reminds us that, now having celebrated Jesus as God's WORD made flesh, the Messiah, Son of David, Light of the nations, and the beloved Son of the Father, has consequences for our lives. We too are Baptized, claiming to be followers of this beloved Son of the Father.

As we go home today, having completed our celebration of the Christmas mystery at this Mass, I would ask you maybe to ponder over two phrases from Luke's Gospel story of Jesus's Baptism. First, Luke tells us: "After all the people had been baptized...Jesus 'also had been baptized....'" At his birth in the flesh, in Jesus, God had crossed a boundary; and, I would say, not only crossed but completely shattered that boundary that separates the divine from the human, heaven from earth. God became one with our sinful human nature.

At his Baptism, Jesus, Son of God, stood in line with sinners awaiting a Baptism that signified a change of life. God loves us so much that God becomes totally identified with our sin, though Jesus never personally sinned. Becoming like us, Jesus is obedient to fallen human nature, even unto death. It is our sinful human condition that Jesus will take to the cross and crucify for us. The joy of the Christmas mystery is that our God is willing to suffer and die with us.

Second, ponder over this: Luke tells us that after having been baptized, Jesus "...was praying..." It was in prayer Jesus experienced the Holy Spirit coming down upon him and the Father proclaiming: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Having experienced God calling him His beloved Son, Jesus was clear about his mission God was sending him on. Jesus responded with such fierce passion to his mission that his subsequent life and death transformed the world.

In our Baptism, the Holy Spirit hovered over you and me, too, and the Father proclaimed over each one of us: "You are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter." You may say, "Yeah, but I don't feel anything like Jesus did!" But remember what Luke said, it was while Jesus "was praying" that he experienced himself being called the "beloved Son." It is the same for us. Luke is telling us that without prayer, we can never experience the fire of our Baptism. Luke portrays Jesus in prayer more than any other Gospel writer.

Although in prayer at his Baptism Jesus experiences the call of God to his mission, it was only through continued prayer that the fullness of his mission became clearer, and Jesus acted on what he heard in prayer.

Luke is calling us to be people who spend time in prayer, if we are to live out our Baptismal call fully. The practical actions we are called to is praying over what we will hear from the Gospel of Luke over the next 8 weeks of Ordinary Time before we enter Lent. So, find a space for yourselves, or a space with a group of others, and pray over the Gospel passages we have from Luke for the next several weeks.

Ask yourselves: how am I being informed by God, how can I live out what I am being called—in my home life, in my work life, in my social life, in my church community life? Spending time seriously in prayer, as Jesus did, we are bound to hear God much more clearly calling us his beloved son, his beloved daughter, as Jesus did.