

Epiphany II

Romans 12: 6-16 & Mark 1: 1-11

In today's gospel, we see that when John the Baptist was performing his ministry in the wilderness, many people came to him to be baptized. We see that Jesus also came to be baptized. And the question one should ask here is why did Jesus come to be baptized like an ordinary person, like you and me?

The importance of the baptism of Jesus

To fully answer this question, let us back at what happened on that day at his baptism. The Father speaks, the Son stands in the water and the Spirit descends like a dove. Three persons, one God. We are still in the season of Epiphany and Epiphany is a revelation. So, in the baptism of Jesus, we see the revelation of the Holy Trinity, one God in three persons.

Here, we need to avoid the heresy of the "adoptionists" who suggest that Jesus became the Son of God at his baptism. That's not true, Jesus has always been the Son of God. He was "begotten of the Father before all worlds;" "There never was a time when the Son was not." What is new in the event of the baptism is that the Son of God has become man. This allows the human Jesus to be revealed as God's Son in the historical event of baptism.

What do we learn from this event of the baptism of Jesus?

When we read the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 3: 13- 17) on the topic of Jesus' baptism, we see that John doesn't know what to make of it. He tries to decline the service. "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" But when Jesus insists, John the Baptist submits. To fulfill all righteousness is to submit to the plan of God even if doesn't make sense to us. It doesn't make sense that Jesus, a holy man, Son of God, God himself, comes to a man, a sinful creature, to be baptized. It doesn't make sense that Jesus identifies with sinners.

Jesus and John were fulfilling the roles that God had instructed them to play. They did it. We are called to do the same.

The other thing we learn from Jesus' baptism is that we all need some encouragement. Jesus was the Son of God, God himself. He had the power to do anything. Yet, here, at his baptism, the Father's voice booms from Heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We all like to be told that someone is pleased with us. Whether it is a simple "thank you" for a service rendered or a little bit of praise for something we have done well, it feels good to be acknowledged and appreciated.

As we work on our common project of evangelism here at St Alban's, let us renew the vows we made at our baptism by recommitting ourselves to using our gifts to serve the Lord.

Let us practice what St Paul is teaching us today (Romans 12: 6-11):

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

⁷ Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching.

⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

¹⁰ Be kindly affectioned one another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

¹¹ Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

Let us dedicate ourselves to becoming Christ to the world, Christ to our country, and Christ to the Church that desperately needs a revival. We have been given a sacred calling...all of us members of the priesthood of believers.... the disciples of Christ. Let us not be afraid to proclaim the Gospel message of love in our words and our actions and may the Holy Spirit give us the grace and the strength to be the lights of Christ in our confused and perverse generation.

May the Lord help every one of us!

Prayer

We praise you, Holy Father: you have made us your children, brothers and sisters of Jesus, and temples of your Holy Spirit. We thank you for making us, Christians. Help us to continue dying to sin and living with Christ for you. Lead all people into your kingdom of light. Through Christ our Lord...