

Homily Baptism of the Lord January Year B 2021

One of the great gifts of Baptism is to be set free from sin, from original sin, and is a prime reason why many of us are baptised. Although Jesus had not sinned, he asked to be baptised not just to show us that he was fully human but also because he recognised the equally important gift and need for the love, guidance, support and grace of his Father. Like Jesus we, too, live in God's favour after baptism.

Jesus would slip away from his disciples from time to time to be with his Father, seeking the Father's help and guidance and a better understanding of his Father's will. This would have developed from a habit he had nurtured throughout his early life and because of which he knew when was the right time for him to begin his active ministry and reveal his presence. Jesus is understood to be both Son and Servant of God.

In Baptism we make a covenant with God. This does not involve signing documents but making a promise based on trust and commitment. We promise to live in the way Jesus has shown us and God promises to watch over, guide and defend us. In reality, we are not always good at keeping our promise whereas God is always faithful. The scriptures testify to that. However often we might fail or let God down, God is always ready to welcome us back and move forward as though the past is forgotten. Jesus' baptism set out the plan for his life which was to be Good News; to set us free from all that harms us, to inaugurate peace for all and to be a guiding light. We are called to live this Good News, to be a light for others and be people of hope and joy. Being blessed and living with God's favour essentially means allowing God to work in and through us. Because the way ahead is unclear and we feel oppressed and threatened by the pandemic, listen to these words from John O'Donoghue:

"This is the time to be slow,
lie low against the wall
until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
the wire brush of doubt
scrape from your heart
all sense of yourself
or your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
time will come good;
and you will find your feet again,
on fresh pastures of promise,
where the air will be kind
and blushed with beginning.

A new life form is discovered on a nearby planet a huge humanoid figure, 200 feet tall while seated. It just sits there. The figure is clearly breathing but does nothing else. Scientists come from all over to investigate but become more and more frustrated at the total lack of movement by the creature. Finally, one of the scientists shouts at the creature. *"Do you think we will ever understand you?!?"* The creature suddenly rises rather ponderously onto his two enormous feet, rubs his chin and says **"NO!"** The creature then sits down again. The scientist slapped his forehead and said **"OF COURSE!!** *It only stands to reason!"*