

Homily The Baptism of Jesus Year A 2023

As we close the Christmas Season, we open a new season with the Baptism of Jesus. Being fully human Jesus needed the help, guidance, support and love of the Father as much as we do. Like us, he needed to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, God's great gift to us, and he needed, like us, to be reassured of the Father's love: "*You are my beloved Son my favour rests on you!*" Unless, of course, you do not believe Jesus was fully human???

Because we rush through the early life of Jesus, ignoring the 30 or so years he lived with his family and worked as a carpenter with Joseph, we fail to realise the importance and value of those years of formation. We may not know what happened, but those years prepared him well for his active ministry. He would have learned about the difficulties and challenges of family life in the places and families where he worked, as well as his own family. Would he not have also experienced failure as well as success, rejection as well as acceptance, hostility as well as friendship, sorrow as well as joy?

Jesus' temptations in the wilderness were the challenges he faced in terms of the kind of person he wanted to be. We all face these challenges in life.

What place do we give to God in our lives? How will we use our power - for ourselves or for others? What importance will we give to riches and wealth in our lives?

Ultimately if, like Jesus, we put God first, the other questions will always be easier to address.

Jesus showed us that even when we make mistakes and fail because we put ourselves above all else, that is not the end. We can pick ourselves up or, better, let God pick us up and help us start forward with a fresh future untainted by the past, unless we let it.

To appreciate better what the gift of Baptism gives to us listen to this story:

An eagle's egg tumbled out of its nest only to fall into a coop full of chickens. When the eaglet hatched, the only world it came to know was that of chickens, and hence spent the first few years pecking on the ground and never spreading his great wings. One day, a majestic eagle flew overhead and spotted his young confrere on the ground, acting like a chicken. "*What's the matter with you?*" he asked. "*Don't you know who you are?*" He then taught the eaglet how to deploy his wings and soar, which the eaglet did without hesitation. The gifts of baptism will help us use our abilities for God and for others in a much more splendid and fulfilling way than we can ever realise without them. Jesus' life shows us what this can mean in all its joys and sorrows, successes and failures.

Day after day we will come to know better what it means to be the ***beloved Daughter or Son of God.***

A father is in church with his three young children, including his five-year-old daughter. As was customary, he sat in the very front row so that the children could properly witness the service.

During this particular service, the minister was baptising a tiny infant. The little five-year-old girl was taken by this, observing that he was saying something and pouring water over the infant's head. With a quizzical look on her face, the little girl turned to her father and asked: "**Daddy, why is he brainwashing that baby??**"