

## **Baptism of the Lord January 13, 2008**

### **Introduction**

**The Octave of the Epiphany and the season of Christmas conclude today with the celebration of the greatest of Jesus' epiphanies, his baptism by John in the river Jordan. This event also marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The voice of God clearly reveals Jesus as the presence and action of God in the world. Jesus fulfills his roles as promised Messiah and as servant of Yahweh, and so brings salvation to the world.**

### **Homily**

**Today's feast is a perfect transition between Christmas and Ordinary Time which begins tomorrow morning. As the second great epiphany of the Lord, it looks back to last Sunday's celebration of Jesus revealing himself to the Gentile magi; and as the first event in the public ministry of Jesus, it looks ahead to our remembering his life during the weeks of ordinary time.**

**We are in cycle A of our Sunday readings, and so focus on Mathew's gospel. In the account of the baptism, Matthew uses Mark's account, but he makes two changes. Matthew records a dialogue between John and Jesus:**

**John says: "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus answers "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."**

**Often this dialogue is said to clarify why Jesus, the sinless one, would ask for a baptism of repentance. But as Reginald Fuller points out in his commentary, there is no reference to sin or sinlessness in this passage. He sees it rather, as an answer to**

**the Baptist sect that existed at the time that believed that John the Baptist, not Jesus, had been the promised messiah. Also, Jesus says that his baptism is to fulfill all righteousness is a fulfillment of Isaiah's words in the first reading today, "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness." God calls his servant Jesus to fulfill his plan of salvation.**

**The second change occurs in the words God speaks from heaven. Mark has God address Jesus directly, "You are my beloved son." Matthew records God saying, "This is my beloved son. . ." Matthew sees the baptism clearly as an epiphany, Jesus being revealed to the Church the true identity of Jesus, Messiah and servant of Yahweh.**

**The words of God spoken at the baptism are quotations from two Old Testament sources. "You are my son," Psalm 2, verse 7, refers to the messiah, the promised son of David who will establish an eternal kingdom. "My beloved, with whom I am well pleased," come from the first Servant Song of the prophet Isaiah, our first reading today.**

**God is clearly revealing Jesus as both Messiah and Servant. Jesus will inaugurate the new creation by accepting the roles the Father has given him, by seeking always to do the will of his heavenly Father.**

**The first Servant Song is reflected throughout the story of Jesus' baptism. Through Isaiah, God had said: "Here is my chosen one. . .with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my Spirit.**

**Isaiah then goes on to list the activities of the servant: to bring forth justice, to be a covenant to the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to set free those who live**

**in darkness. These are the things Jesus will do during his ministry.**

**Our second reading presents some of the catechetical teaching of the early Church. Notice how Peter attributes everything to God, working in Jesus. This passage contains the only reference to Jesus' baptism outside the gospels. Peter proclaims that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. It is his anointing that makes him the Christ, the anointed one, and enables him to do his ministry.**

**Today's feast and these scripture readings call us to reflect on our faith in Jesus and his identity. In him we see the glory of God, present and active in our world. And as risen Lord, he remains with us. Where do we see his glory reflected in our lives, in our world?**