



Contributed by Father Paul Voisin, C.R.

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BAPTISM OF THE LORD
January 9, 2022

GATHERING TIME
(10-15 Minutes)

Introduction to the Word:

I remember one of my friends telling me that he learned a lot about his father—and their relationship—at the time of the visitation at the funeral home when his father had died. Their relationship had its difficult moments. He was so surprised when so many of his father’s friends and co-workers came up to him and told him how proud his father was of him, and how often he talked to them about his accomplishments. He wasn’t sure if these people would even know that he had a son, let alone that he was proud of him and boasted about him. He was surprised, because he rarely remembered his father ever congratulating him or telling him to his face that he was proud of him, or even that he loved him. Sad, but true!

In our human condition, often so much of our self-identity comes from what other people tell us we are: we are gifted, we are lazy, we are special, we are stupid, etc. Some of these words hurt and wound, while others fill us with confidence and pride. Often adults, significant people in the lives of children and youth, do not realize the power and influence of their words, nor the effect that it has on young lives who are looking for acceptance and understanding, not judgment or condemnation; for support and love, not indifference or hate; for loving correction and help, not shouts and criticism. In the gospel this weekend the Father tells Jesus who He is. What joy that must have brought to His heart, hearing those words of the Father.

Warm-up Activity *(about 8-10 minutes):*

We have all had experiences – positive and negative – in which people have told us who we are. Some words we welcomed, and others we are trying to forget.

How have supportive and loving words of others formed me, made me who I am, and helped me to identify who I am?

How have judgmental and critical words of others ‘de-formed’ me, have prevented me from becoming who I want to be, and confused me, or were obstacles to identifying myself in a positive way?

How have my words, recently, helped someone to identify themselves in a positive way?

The Table of the Word

Although intellectually we know that we "belong" to God through our Baptism, it is not always easy for people to truly 'feel' that. For some people, I have found this lies in their doubt about the love of God for them. Just as the man in my story doubted the love and 'pleasure' of his father, sometimes we too—in our human condition—can doubt the love of another, even of God. Sometimes people have expressed to me their fear that God cannot love them, because if God knows all about me, all my innermost thoughts and feelings, how can He love me? Especially when we experience that there are other people who do not love us, because of things we say and do, it is natural that we would doubt that God would love us. However, God is God, and He is not limited by our human logic. His love is unconditional and a free gift. We do not 'earn' it, it is ours because he created us. God assures us that we are loved, and we are loveable, and that we are called to love. God is "well pleased" with us, as He was with Jesus. Another challenge for some people is the lack of feeling of belonging to the Church, specifically their parish community. Although, we have made strides as a Church, we still need to be more welcoming and friendly in our parish communities. Sometimes parishioners sit near the same people for years, and have no idea of their names. They see each other at the supermarket and smile, but have no idea of the other person's name. Unfortunately, this also means that we are not really connected, although we belong to the same faith community and worship together. This is unfortunate, and we need to take concrete steps to say, "I see you all the time, but I don't know you name". It may be embarrassing at first, but the results of it are worth it, because then we feel more engaged not only with one another, but with the parish and the Church.

Penitential Rite:

By our Baptism we belong to God. Although the heavens did not open at our Baptism, nor was the voice of the Father heard, we are God's "beloved" and He "is well pleased with us". This is who we are! Over and over again, God reveals to us, in so many ways, who we are, and who we are to become. Matthew Kelly, in *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, constantly refers to being a "better version of ourselves".

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me and gracing me with a share in your life,

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, may I announce to others who they truly are in your eyes,

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, give me wisdom and understanding, to always choose my words well,

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray:

Lord God, you offer us holiness in our Baptism.
This gift shapes the whole of Christian life,
and becomes a duty,
calling us to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.
We pray that, through our incorporation into the life of your Son,
and the indwelling of the Spirit,
we may never settle for a life of mediocrity,
marked by a minimalistic ethic and a shallow religiosity.
Help us be firm in living out our baptismal commitment,
uniting ourselves with you,
and bearing witness in the world to your divine presence,
your divine love, and our salvation through the waters of Baptism.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering word, and that God is present in the word proclaimed. This is the word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the small Christian community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God's Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)*

FIRST READING Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Thus says the Lord: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smouldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching. I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING Acts 10:34-38

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

GOSPEL Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

COMMENTARY:

Our First Reading mirrors, in some ways, the words of the gospel - that God is pleased, and that He has put His spirit into His servant. Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy, as God-made-man. The words reflect the tenderness of God - that He has "grasped them by the hand", and "formed them". He has made a covenant with the people, and has given them His blessing. We share in the new covenant through the blood of Jesus, sealed in our Baptism.

In the Second Reading, Peter preaches to the people seeking Christ, just as John the Baptist did. They are all children of God, and they are called to be brothers and sisters of one another. Through their Baptism they share in the life of God, and belong to the family of God.

In the account of the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan by John the Baptist God the Father makes it clear "This is my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased". The Father left no doubt in the mind of those present – and Jesus – that this was His Son, that He loved Him, and that He was pleased with Him. This manifestation was a source of joy for Jesus, and an acknowledgement to the people of the divine presence of the Son of God among them.

Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. "I formed you" Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Although the word 'investment' is a word drawn from the world of finance, it is also a reality in relationships. Either we are 'invested' in someone, or we are not! God is invested in us! From our Baptism we are in relationship with God. We share in His life, and He shares in ours. In this relationship God always takes an active role. He forms us! He molds us, and makes us into the "best version of ourselves" that we can be.

- a) How do I identify that God has 'formed me'?
- b) How do I identify that God has 'reformed me'?
- c) How do I identify that God has 'transformed me'?

2. “*God was with him*” **Acts 10:34-38**

Jesus knew that His Father was with Him. Peter, and Cornelius, and John knew that God was with him. This belief/understanding/experience made each of them who they were in the plan of God.

- a) How has my awareness of “God with me” grown?
- b) How secure am I in sharing my faith with others?
- c) How do I show that God has no “partiality”?

3. “*With you I am well pleased*” **Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

Every child seeks the “pleasure” and acceptance of their parent(s). Some children will go to great lengths to achieve that goal, twisting and turning their real selves to present themselves as an ‘acceptable’ child, teen or (even) adult. In some families, parents may even be reluctant (now I am dating myself!) to praise their child too much, for fear of giving them a ‘swelled head’. Sometimes criticism comes easily, and praise takes a conscious effort.

- a) Why do I believe that God is “well pleased” with me?
- b) How do I see myself as “beloved” by God?
- c) How am I conscious of living MY Baptism daily?

CARING-PRAYING TIME: (15-20 minutes)

1. **Word of the Week:** “**You are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased**”

2. **Suggestions for the Week:**

This week, begin each morning reminding yourself of these words of the Father. You are his “Beloved” and He is “well pleased” with you. In our human condition there are times in our day that we might not believe that, and might not experience it either. We may be ‘disconnected’ with God, but He is still intimately ‘invested’ in us. At the end of the day repeat these words to yourself and give God thanks for the moments in which you experienced yourself in this way (like the Consciousness Examen). Also look at the same day and ask for forgiveness for the moments in which you did not feel/act/speak like one “Beloved” by God, or with whom God is “well pleased”.

3. **Intercessions:**

As we celebrate this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, let us not only reflect on the Baptism of Jesus, but on our own Baptism in Christ, and how our lives have been “formed” by the grace of this Sacrament of Initiation into life with God, and in the Church.

Lord God, renew in us this life of grace that is ours in Christ through our Baptism. We pray ...
Lord, hear us

Lord God, help us to encourage others in their baptismal commitment through our faithful discipleship and stewardship. We pray ... **Lord, hear us**

Lord God, bless with your grace those who are considering Baptism, especially those participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. We pray ... **Lord, hear us**

Lord God, may our Godparents be blessed by you, here on earth, and in your kingdom. We pray ... **Lord, hear us**

How can we help you in prayer this week?

Let us pray:

(adapted from the Rite of Baptism)

“Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs,
which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

In Baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol
of the grace you give us in this Sacrament.

At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters,
making them the wellspring of all holiness.

The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of Baptism,
that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.

Through the waters of the Red Sea you led Israel out of slavery,
to be an image of God's holy people, set free from sin by Baptism.

In the waters of the Jordan your Son was baptized by John
and anointed with the Spirit.”

Almighty God, renew this “wellspring” in us
as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of your Beloved Son.

May these saving waters
lead us to faithfully live our baptismal commitment
each and every day,
sharing in your life,
and sharing this life with the world.

We ask this in the name of your Beloved Son,
through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

**With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one,
OUR FATHER...**

Celebrating the Word, Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. (Celebrating the Word was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012). For information: **website:** www.resurrectionists.ca. **Email:** provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).