Homily for the Baptism of the Lord(1/12/2020)

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A man is talking to God. “God, how long is a million years to you?” God answers, “A million years? To me, it’s about a minute.” “God, how much is a million dollars to you?” God says, “A million dollars? To me, it’s a penny.”

Then, the man asks, “God, can I have a penny?” God replies, “Wait a minute!”

Today, we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. Through the weeks, we have big celebrations for the mystery of salvations.

About two weeks ago, on Christmas day, through the Birth of Jesus, we saw the arrival of the Light in the world, and last week, on the Epiphany, through the Magi, we saw the manifestation of the true Light of the world to all the nations.

And, today, through the Baptism of Jesus, we see the beginning of the ministry of the Light in the world.

Through the Baptism, Jesus begins His public ministry. His mission is to make God present in the ordinary events of daily lives. So, as we close Christmas season and begin the Ordinary Time, we see the ministry of Jesus on earth. Now, God is among us in the Ordinary Time, in the ordinary events of every daily life.

The Baptism of Jesus reminds us that He has come into our world as one of us; and has associated Himself with us sinners; by being baptized at the hands of John the Baptist who was a mere human being.

How remarkable that Jesus should have joined this crowed of sinners on the banks of the Jordan, waiting to be baptized! Let us look at this moment in the Jordan River.

Jesus stood in line at His baptism with people. One of the features of modern life with which we are all familiar is ‘standing in line.’ We stand in line at the super market, at the movie theater, at voting booth, at the airplane ticket counter, at a restaurant, and so on. We all know the response to someone who cuts into the line or jumps ahead of the line.

Whatever our educational or income level, ‘standing in line’ makes us all equal. Now, Jesus also stands in line for Baptism with other people.

The water of the Jordan River that day was filled with sinners of all kinds as hundreds, maybe thousands, of people came to repent. It was filled with every imaginable evil, with all kinds of sins. And, it was dirty water!

Many Pharisees and Scribes refused to step into such water. They didn’t want to be seen with sinners. They thought there was no need for repentance and washing for their lives. But, Jesus was not ashamed to step into the water with other sinners. He had no need of that, of course.

There, He stood in line, shoulder to shoulder with the sinners. Here, His mission begins with an act of compassion and solidarity, as He takes upon Himself all of our burdens and sins.

It was a symbol of what His mission on earth was all about. There, He invites people to God’s love and mercy and forgiveness. He shows solidarity with all of us who are in need of healing. He became one of us, and He truly came into our lives.

Then, God reveals Jesus as His Son. The Gospel says, ‘Heaven was opened for Him, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. And, a voice came from heaven, “This is my beloved Son.”’

It was a public announcement identifying Jesus as Son by God Himself. It was very clear and visible for all to see; Jesus Christ is Son of God, the Messiah, and the Savior for all. True and deepest identity of Jesus is revealed by His Father.

These words will continue to resound in the heart of Jesus throughout His life, reminding Him of who He is. Even as He dies on the cross, Jesus hands Himself over to death with the words, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” He remains always the Beloved Son. It was His identity, mission, and destiny.

In the Baptism of our Lord, we also recall our own Baptism when heavens opened for us, the Holy Spirit descended on us, and we were called to be God’s children. Baptism was the revelation of our true identity as Children of God! It tells us how great our dignity and vocation are!

Now, we are not sinners any more. We were saved. It was the mission of Jesus Christ to save His people from sins. This is what Jesus promised to those who are baptized. That’s why Jesus step into the water to be baptized.

Today, we can ask ourselves: Are we living up to our dignity and our vocation as baptized Christians?

Knowing ourselves as Beloved Sons and Daughters provides the key, the place from which our mission and destiny flows. All of us have a mission in life, no matter what our particular vocation. Whatever this mission may be, it cannot be discovered unless we first discover our identity in God.

In Baptism, Jesus reminds us our identity, our mission, and our destiny. God says to us today, “You are my beloved sons and daughters; with you I am well pleased.”