

The Commissioning

By: Fr. John Foley, J.J.

First there is the question of why the Lord needed to be baptized, since he was already the foundation of the Church, the possessor of the Holy Spirit, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

One simple answer is that he wanted to be like us in everything. He did not cling to godliness, and thus would join us in baptism too.

But the readings this coming Sunday are not mainly about his Baptism anyway. All the readings are concerned more with what happened after the Baptism, as Jesus came up out of the waters of the Jordan.

Let us use our imaginations to get at the story.

The weather was very hot that day at the river. Plunging into the water must have felt good. The musty smell of stale pools of river-water was less appealing, as was people's body odor—daily baths of the first world have removed this quickly. And John the Baptist's voice was loud, even harsh, in order to reach the waiting crowd.

Imagine how Jesus looked. Probably just like any other impoverished citizen. He had no special means to trim his beard, or to keep dirt off his feet or off his clothes. Look at him for a minute. Then watch him enter into John's baptism, submerging his body entirely when told to.

Can you remember swimming in a river as kid, how it felt to sink into muddy, strange colored water; how it got into your nose and eyes and if you were not careful into your mouth too? This Jesus felt.

When he burst up out of the water—you remember how it sounds when you come up—a surprise happened. The sky itself splashed open! The New American Bible translation says the heavens were "torn open." Then the Spirit descended through the torn spot to anoint Jesus, to acknowledge publicly to the world that God's ancient covenant of love now could be beheld standing directly

in front of the people, in the flesh, dripping with river water just as they were.

God's ancient covenant. Remember it? "I agree to your God and you agree to be my people." It was re-stated many times in scripture, but especially five centuries earlier in the book of Isaiah:

Thus says the LORD:

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one whom I am pleased,
upon whom I have put my spirit.
He shall bring forth justice to the nations
(First Reading).

This is how God will enact his covenant with the people. Isaiah wrote these words during the exile of Israel in Babylon. And now Jesus hears almost exactly the same words as he rises out of the waters and the Holy Spirit descends upon him.

"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

We learn so much in this simple scene about how the kingdom of God, promised so many times, will come to be.

It will not be harsh ("not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street"). It will bring God's love to the sweaty, unkempt, dripping wet, dishonest (and honest), alluring (and repulsive) people of everyday life, instead of excluding them. Jesus, the covenant, will invite people down from trees where they scrambled in order to see him; he will say "of course I do" in answer to "Lord if you want to you can cure me"; he will have pity on the soldiers stuck with the job of killing and on the shrewd thief who has sense enough to ask for pity.

In short, Jesus is publicly anointed this Sunday so that he can reach into the heart and soul of each of us, if we have sense enough to let him—especially to let him into parts that so shame and embarrass us.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 42:1-7 Acts 10:34-38 Mark 1:7-11

January 11, 2015

靈 修 生 活

祢 是 我 所 愛 的

飛 鳳

今天的福音記載耶穌在約旦河受洗，天開了，聖神宛如鴿子降在耶穌身上，有聲音從天上說：「祢是我的愛子，我因祢而喜悅。」這句話令我想起昔日自己接受洗禮時雀躍不已，當時心裡確信著：天父給了我同樣的祝福。我立志要按耶穌的教導生活，認定只有這樣，才堪當領受天父愛女的祝福。

不過，要當基督徒可不是我想像中那麼容易，我還是很容易犯上這樣的過失；一遇上考驗，心裡對天父即有許多的抱怨；我的祈禱生活總是不能持續；我常掉進保祿所描述的困境「我不明白我作的是甚麼；我所願意的，我偏不作；我所憎恨的，我反而去作。應做的，我卻不做。」（羅馬書七 15）；在信仰上，我經常是說一套，活另一套！然而，正是在反省中，在羞愧和難過的相煎下，將我一次又一次帶到神父前領受修和聖事，與此同時，一再聽天父重複說著：「祢是我的愛女，我因祢而喜悅。」我經驗祂無限的慈愛和包容。正是天父這份慈愛和包容，讓我願意逐漸離開昔日的生活。作為老師，我也學習對學生說同樣的話：「祢是我所愛的，我因你而喜悅。」我希望學生也分享天父的愛。

今年我擔任中一愛班班主任。開學不久，學生問題叢生：基礎弱、上課秩序差、欠交功課情況嚴、同學間互相排斥，經常吵罵．．．。半年過去，班上大部份學生的學業成績仍是差強人意，但同學間的相處顯然比前和睦，吵罵少了，彼此排斥的行為也少了。班長、各科科長、班會幹事、「花后」（盆栽組長）都因為經過訓練及日復日承擔職務，獲得同學的肯定和支持。那個多次逃學的學生，我鼓勵他上學，放學留下他做功課，和他交談。他臉上的笑容多了，上學的動力也增強了。那個舉止粗魯、不斷用負面行為吸引別人注意的女孩子，我不認同她的行為，卻愛錫她，並鼓勵一些成熟的同學嘗試接納她，幾個月過去了，她改變了一些壞習慣，同學慢慢發現她的好處，她開心告訴我她終於有朋友了！那個情緒不穩的重讀生，每次向我反映問題時，我總是專注聆聽，然後鼓勵他用合理的方法解決，他明顯比去年有進步，大多時間都能控制自己情緒，也比前開心；那幾個欠交功課的「積犯」，我陪他們放學留校做功課一段時間後，情況已見好轉。

早前，為慶祝聖誕節，學校舉行壁佈設計比賽和走廊設計比賽，我班在兩項比賽都贏得冠軍，全班都開心不已。事前，除鼓勵學生分組負責外，我們利用課餘時間一起討論，討論有了共識，再分頭繪圖、著色、佈置。班上的大部份同學都有份參與，過程中，他們學會互相合作，彼此接納，以及承擔責任。他們對自己班多了歸屬感！宣佈獲獎時，我看出他們臉上流露的喜悅和自豪。雖然教導他們殊不容易，也滿有掙扎，多少次，求天父讓我效法祂，不要失望，抱有信心。想到他們這半年來點點滴滴的進步，我忽然感到擔任他們的班主任是上主最好不過的安排呢！祂讓我和學生都有機會伸展，我和學生都是祂所愛的！

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 五 年 一 月 十 一 日

依 42:1-7; 宗 10:34-38; 谷 1:7-11