

## The Baptism of Jesus, 9 January 2022

Homily: Fr. Ken

Not long ago, some friends, both former mechanical engineering students of mine at the University of Dayton, gave birth to their first child. All went well as the baby was safely delivered.

In a way of speaking, there was a sense for both parents of having partaken in an event that verges on cosmic significance, not just for their personal lives but for the world at large.

There is an Eastern European tradition to lay the newborn child directly on the earth in recognition that this is mother earth, the womb from which we all emerge, and to which we all in some profound ways belong.

Other cultures, too, celebrate birth with a deep awareness of how in that moment we share in the great gift of creation.

In a certain view, those traditions make our modern Western approach seem contradictory. That is to say, on the one hand, we retain the desire to have the children we want and whom we will love. But on the other hand, our society often cannot deal with children who arrive unexpectedly, or who do not conform to the pattern of health and intelligence we had hoped for.

We would prefer to forge a world solely in our own image and likeness rather than accepting the mysterious world that has been given to us in the image and likeness of its Creator. We have too narrow a framework for those whom we will call "beloved".

Looking at the Scripture readings, there had been so many prophecies and predictions of the coming Messiah. What remained uncertain was what the one to come would be like. There was a sense that God will come with power, as the first

reading from Isaiah indicates, but the Lord will also be like a shepherd feeding his flock, and holding them close.

The Psalm suggests the power of God. But this wealth of creation is then linked to God's intimate love for us, providing us with the food for life.

All of these seemingly contrary but actually complementary expectations reach our fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

The public life of Jesus will be the expression of how he fulfills the hopes and promises the people have listened to all of their lives.

In Luke's Gospel, which we heard read at today's Mass, it is when Jesus is at prayer after his baptism that the Holy Spirit comes down upon him, sealing the calling he has received from God, who in turn declares the closeness of their relationship, which has three aspects: Jesus is God's own Son, he is God's beloved, and God's favor rests on him.

The same three aspects lie at the heart of what happens to us at our baptism. Baptism is the moment when we are aware of the God-given sharing in creation that has just taken place in the birth of each child.

As we thank God for the gift of children it makes sense to link that thanksgiving with the words spoken by God the Creator at the start of Jesus' public life. We are all God's children, and that means first of all that we too are beloved by God.

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