

## BAPTISM OF THE LORD - 2019

No one likes standing in a line; I certainly don't.

It can be a real test of my patience, especially at the grocery store when every other line seems to be moving quickly - except the one I'm in!

Often at parish meals with a buffet I'm invited to go to the front of the line.

It can be a bit embarrassing, though I appreciate the intention of respect it implies.

What strikes me in today's Gospel account of the Baptism of Jesus is that he is standing in line with a group of sinners who needed the conversion symbolized by the baptism being performed by John.

Because he was the sinless Son of God, Jesus did not need to be baptized.

And yet, there he was, patiently waiting at the back of the line. Why?

As one commentator put it: "He who came to take away the sins of the world knew why he was standing in that line."

"His plan was not to redeem humankind from a distance, but rather to mingle, to be identified, with [those he came to save.]"

Of course, that was the purpose of his Incarnation from the start:

Jesus:

- Was born of a humble human mother,
- Was obedient to Mary and Joseph,
- Went to school and did his chores,
- Learned the trade of a carpenter,
- Cared for his mother Mary after Joseph's death

Jesus spent 30 years immersed in ordinary human life before he took that plunge in the Jordan River.

But, his humanity alone would not save us.

The Baptism of the Lord is also an epiphany, a revelation of the fullness of his identity.

We are told that after Jesus came out of the water, "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 same source I quoted earlier writes:

"The Incarnation of God's Son opened a place in humanity to make way for divinity; Jesus' baptism and prayer open a breach in the sky so that, through the action of the Spirit, our life will ascend to its true dignity."

In other words, because the Son of God mingled with ordinary people, lived as a brother among us, and was obedient even unto death, he reconciled humanity with God, making it possible for us to become God's children.

That's what happened when we were baptized.

At our Baptism the Father declared that we are his beloved sons or daughters.

Through Baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon us and now dwells within us.

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Am I on fire with the Holy Spirit? Are you?

Are we fired up for the mission of Jesus described in the First Reading as a "light to the nations"?

Are we immersed in in the "bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" described by St. Paul?

You and I are called to live as beloved sons and daughters of God as we stand in line with our brothers and sisters, fellow pilgrims on our common journey to the fullness of God's Kingdom.