

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, [C]

January 10, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: ISAIAH 40: 1-5, 9-11

A voice cries out: In the desert, prepare the way of the Lord

PSALM 104

O bless the Lord, my soul...when you send forth your Spirit, they are created.

2ND READING: TITUS 2: 11-14, 3:4-7

...he saved us by the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he richly poured out

GOSPEL: LUKE 3:15-16, 21-22

And a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

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Today we come to the house of the Lord which is still beautifully decorated but strangely different. Instead of a Gospel about a newborn baby in the manger, we hear about John baptizing a full grown Jesus. It seem like Christmas is about to become a memory. But no, Christmas was not an end in itself; it was just the beginning of a great adventure.

John was not the sort of guy you would invite to your new year's dinner party. He comes to us wearing "a garment of camel's hair" that you can bet was not designed by Calvin Klein eating locusts which you know you could not order at Carrabas. He was a teetotaler who might take an axe to you barrel of beer. He may have baptized hundreds of people that day when Jesus entered the Jordan River. My guess is by the time Jesus came through John wasn't even paying attention. But as Jesus prayed the heavens opened and then John knew. Later, as he was talking to some of his own disciples, he pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

There was a young man with a very prominent nose. He was handsome in every other way, but his friends called him, "*the nose*." He married and one day his wife told him the good news. The happy couple was thrilled; they thought up names, they prayed for health. The big day came and the nose paced up and down and held his wife's hand. He could hardly wait to see his newborn son. The

nurse handed the child to his mother and they were aglow in happiness. The nose didn't look at his baby's feet. He didn't look at his baby's hands. He reached down and touched the baby's nose, and then he touched his own nose and said, *"That's my boy, he looks just like me!"* Today, as Jesus was baptized by John the Father says, "That's my boy, he looks just like me." Later, Jesus told the apostle Phillip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

What should Jesus do with the sad world that his Father created to be happy? Jesus knew human nature all too well. He knew the answer wasn't economics—there will always be rich and poor. He knew the answer wasn't political—there will always be powerful and weak. He knew the answer wasn't in fixing the system but in offering an alternative. He ate and drank with known sinners. He healed lepers and the Roman officer's daughter. He preached repentance. He said anyone can be good to their own family or friends who will be good to them in return; his followers must love their neighbor, even their enemies, like the Good Samaritan. His followers feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick or imprisoned. His followers take care of the lonely, the widowed, and the fatherless child.

We live in a culture of confusion. We have empathy for a billionaire golfer living a false life but not for the homeless in downtown Gainesville. Our culture lifts up Rap talkers who push drugs; athletes who push guns; and movie stars who push yogurt. Who do you want to be like? Do we want the Bourne Identity or the Christ identity. This is what Bethlehem is all about. The Son of God took flesh to empower us to be like him. The Father wants to recognize himself in us. Baptism puts us in the game. We point to Jesus in different ways. St. Stephen was the first martyr, he pointed to Jesus with his blood. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas pointed to Jesus with their brilliance. St. Teresa of Avila with her mysticism and St. Francis of Assisi with his imagination pointed to Jesus. Today, people in professions point to Jesus by penetrating technology with the Gospel; civil servants point to Jesus by passionately striving for justice; professors and teachers point to Jesus by teaching young minds to pursue truth and students point to Jesus by experiencing reality in light of the Creator and

Redeemer. Whatever our calling or our talents, we point to Christ in the measure we are Christ-like. My friends, Christmas never ends, we take it with us. Baptism never ends, we take it with us. The Mass never ends, we take it with us. It is the light within us that offers good news world.