

When Jesus was baptized, he heard a voice which said, “This is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” The voice signified the Father’s complete and unconditional approval of his Son.

In the context of Jesus’ baptism, we see the human need for approval. After we have satisfied our physical needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) we want something more. One of the things we naturally desire is the approval or respect of others. Children are eager for the approval of their parents and teachers. The elderly want a measure of respect for their past contributions – and for what they presently have to offer.

The desire for approval is very good and natural – but it also has a danger. Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that “if only people would appreciate me,” then I would be happy. However, if the admiration of others automatically brought happiness, then the happiest people in the world would be Hollywood actors. Hardly anyone on the planet gets more admiration than they do, yet many are very unhappy.

You and I are thirsty for an approval this world cannot give. If we drink a little of what this world offers, it only makes us more thirsty. But true water does exist. We have a clue in this Sunday’s Gospel. When Jesus was baptized, he heard a voice which said, “This is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” By joining ourselves to Jesus, we gain the approval which counts. The approval of others is good, but it only points to an acceptance which will last. We have that approval right now by virtue of our baptism.

On today’s Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, there is very important message to parents. One of the most meaningful things we can do is tell our children about the day of their baptism: how they were dressed, who were the godparents, how the child reacted when the water was poured over him, what the candle looked like, who was the priest or deacon, what the church was like - and the things you did before and after the ceremony. Any detail you can remember will have significance for your child - even if he is a teenager or an adult. And above all, let him know that on the day of his baptism was spoken those most beautiful words, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”