

JANUARY 10, 2021
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Mark 1: 7-11

“JESUS IDENTIFIED WITH US.”

“When leprosy broke out among the people of the Hawaiian Islands in the middle of the 19th century, the government authorities responded by establishing a leper colony on the remote island of Molokai. The victims were snatched by force from their families and sent to this island to perish. However, moved by their terrible plight, a young Belgian priest, Saint Damien De Veuster (canonized October 11, 2009), asked permission from his superiors in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary to minister to them. Straightaway, he realized that there was only one effective way to do this, and that was to go and live among them. Having got permission, he went to Molokai. At first, he tried to minister to the lepers while maintaining a certain distance. But he soon realized that he had to live among them in order to gain their trust. As a result, he contracted leprosy himself. The reaction of the lepers was immediate and wholehearted. They embraced him and took him to their hearts. He was now one of them. There was no need, no point anymore, in keeping his distance. The lepers had someone who could talk with authority about leprosy, about brokenness, about rejection and public shame. Today’s Gospel tells us how, by receiving the baptism of repentance, Jesus became identified with the sinners whom he had come to save.”¹

The baptism of Jesus as we know is not a baptism of repentance but a baptism of mission. He wants to be with His people and the first thing He must do is for Him to be identified with His people, that is, He is willing to give all and save all, provide example to imitate and be a faithful sons and daughters of God by following what God the Father wants us to do.

¹ <http://frtonyshomilies.com>

“In the Gospel John the Baptist sets the stage for the public manifestation of Jesus on the banks of the river Jordan. John had been preaching and calling people to repentance and a change of heart and as a sign of their repentance he was baptizing them. Jesus comes as one among the many people to be baptized and John was surprised. Why did Jesus come for baptism to John? People came to John to be baptized as a sign that they were sorry for their sins. Jesus received baptism as a sign that he was sorry for the sins of all mankind and because of his decision to pay for the sins of mankind with his obedience unto death of the cross. Though Jesus was sinless, his baptism was necessary for several reasons. It was for him a moment of decision. Jesus takes up the challenge of His father by making his public decision to launch his mission on earth. Secondly, Jesus’ baptism was his moment of identification. It was time for him to identify himself with the God-ward movement, with those who stand for God and his kingdom. The Jews considered themselves to be children of Abraham, and by that fact, assured of salvation. But John had begun this strange movement of Jewish acknowledgement of sin and of its repentance. Jesus saw this movement and was happy to undergo John’s baptism to signify that he identified with it. Thirdly, Jesus’ baptism was a moment of approval for him. Jesus was ready and willing to carry out the mission his Father had in store for him and now he receives the approval of his Father. The voice from the heavens tells us who Jesus is and also affirms for Jesus that he is the well-beloved son of the Father. Lastly the baptism for Jesus was the moment of empowerment. In ancient times, kings and priests used to be anointed to show that it was God who was appointing them to carry out their work in his name. Now Jesus was priest, prophet, and king, in fact he was The Priest, Prophet and King. As the pouring of the oil on priests, prophets and kings declared these people to be appointed by God to be His messengers, so the Father shows Jesus to be his messenger, not by anointing with oil but by filling Him with the Holy Spirit.”²

My brothers and sisters, how can we follow the attitude of giving and offering of Jesus’ life to save us sinners? Like St. Damien, the saint in our story, how can we be

² www.stories4homilies.co

identified with Jesus as He surrender everything for us to be reconciled to God the Father? We are being called to be the light and salt of the world especially people around us, our family, your husband, your wife, your children, your neighbors. By being loving, truthful, compassionate and merciful, others may see God in us and His message of salvation will shine through us. So, let us ask our Lord Jesus to fill us with the Holy Spirit, like the dove coming down on Him so that we may radiate the joy of the Gospel to everyone and to those around us.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus, send and fill me with your Holy Spirit, stir up my heart with love, mercy, compassion and joy of the Gospel. In flame my desire to serve and give all to you as You please and found joy in seeking to follow and obey Your Father in heaven. Strengthen me to do the will of the Father, share the blessings to others, and follow the mission entrusted to me so that at the end, God the Father will also say: You are my sons and daughter, with you am well pleased. Amen."