

**Feast of Baptism of the Lord - *This is my Children, my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.***

January 10, 2021

The Christmas season ends this Sunday with the **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord**. This Sunday, we celebrate the public proclamation that Jesus is more than just one of us. He has more than a human nature. **He has a Divine Nature. He is the Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased.**

We begin with John the Baptist. *The Gospel of Luke* Chapter 1 tells the story of John's birth. His parents Zachariah and Elizabeth were unable to have children. Elizabeth was past childbearing age when Zachariah had a vision in the Temple where the angel Gabriel told him that he and Elizabeth would have a son that he would name John. This son would be a prophet like Elijah, one of the most powerful prophets of the Old Testament.

This Sunday's Gospel, from the *Gospel of Mark* (1:7-11), advances the story 30 years. We come upon John, teaching and baptizing at the Jordan River. He is demanding an end to evil in the world and calling people to repent and be baptized as a sign that they will join him in the fight for the Kingdom of God. He also speaks about the one to come. As prophesied in the *Book of Malachi*, John is the new Elijah who prepares the coming of the Messiah. Jesus chooses to be baptized by John to show that he is one with all those who are fighting against evil and fighting for the Kingdom of God. John says that he himself does not deserve to untie Jesus' sandals, but Jesus demands he be baptized. We, the people of the world who long for the Kingdom can see that our King is one of us. After the Baptism, the voice of God the Father proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God. ***This is my Son, my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.***



Our downtown St John the Baptist Church was almost totally damaged during the April flooding in Fort McMurray. Using the opportunity, Fr. Augustine the Pastor renovated the 50 years old church: fixing the ruined pews, new flooring, new sanctuary, etc. He contracted Arturo Guerrero a mural artist from Ecuador to do two canvas paintings: Visitation and Baptism of Lord, and Owen, our talented parishioner/carpenter volunteered to do the frames. The new sanctuary was unveiled on December 24 just in time for Christmas celebration! Every time we are in the Church to celebrate the Eucharist, or pray, I am sure we can relive the Baptism of our Lord. We will feel we are going down into the Jordan River too.



Speaking of the Jordan River, in February 2012 we joined the diocesan Holy Land Pilgrimage and visited Jesus baptism place in Jordan River. If we wanted to be "immersed" in the Jordan water where Jesus was baptized, we had to pay a fee, like paying to play games or have a ride in an amusement park. There, the

meaning of baptism is totally commercialized. Aren't we glad we don't have to pay to be baptized, to become children of God?

Our baptism is not an event of the past, it is an ever present reality, a life changing moment, a constant sharing in the divine life of the Risen Christ. It is a daily invitation to come closer to God and to be helpers in his work of saving the world. We are servants of God to make this world a better place. Jesus' baptism started his public ministry and went about doing great things. We may not do great things but we can do good things as a way to make a public statement about our faith. A famous Hong Kong actress 羅蘭 (Helena Law Lan), a devout Catholic did just that. In an interview with the Fountain of Love and Life, she shared the story of her baptism. She had a high fever at five and her parents took her to a nearby hospital run by nuns. She was in a coma and the doctor said she might not live. With her parents' consent, the nuns baptized her. A day after the Baptism, she started to open her eyes and after staying in hospital for a month, was fully healed. Eventually, her mom and dad got baptized too. For the past 60+years, she has been a faithful Catholic trusting God in everything. Sharing her time, treasure, and talents heavily involves in charity. Using all the public engagements as an actress, she promoted faith in God. With her baptism, Helena was caught on fire to help build God's kingdom

***“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (vitae spiritualis ianua), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.”*** (Catechism of Catholic Church, 1213-1215). What does this mean to us? It means that we become the children of God after our Baptism in union with Jesus and with God. He has a human nature given to him through Mary, and a divine nature eternally at one with God. We don't just give him the title *God*. He is God. **When we call upon Jesus to help us, we are praying to God.** When we receive communion, we receive God within us. When we seek forgiveness, we are forgiven not by the priest but by God. When we are married in the Church, Jesus united His Love to our love for each other in the sacrament of marriage. Jesus is our God and yet one like us. He knows all the emotions that we feel in his human nature. Through His divine nature, he heals us.

We go down into the water with John the Baptist, determined to fight for the Kingdom of God, and we leave the water with Jesus Christ, our Divine Champion who brings salvation to all. In our own unique way, we can complete the mission which Christ began after his baptism and we can ask ourselves if we are being true to the direction in which our lives were pointed at our own baptism whereby we become Children of God. With our ears open, each one of us will hear: ***“This is my Child, my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.”***