

Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7 or Isaiah 55: 1-11
Acts 10: 34-38 or 1 John 5: 1-9
Mark 1: 7-11

FOCUS: *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”*

Today as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the question, “Why did Jesus do it?” may have passed through your mind more than once.

The Church teaches that the purpose of the Sacrament of Baptism is to remove the stain of original sin, forgive all the personal sins that have been committed prior to this act, and to unite one to Christ and his Church. Of course, that is about Christian Baptism and the sacrament that our Lord left for us. Clearly, Jesus did not need this sacrament, so the question remains, “Why did He do it?”

If we look at the baptism administered by John we learn that this was a Baptism of Repentance. John had just made a profession of faith in Jesus, yet, Jesus, who was without sin, came to John to be baptized. Again, the question, “Why?”

Throughout the centuries, theologians and scholars have wrestled with this question. Most have not come up with one definitive answer. Some consider the action of Jesus a model for others to follow or an act of humility and righteousness. The answer may well be found in the words of the “voice....from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’”

Many in the early Christian communities say the baptism of Jesus as another epiphany of the Son of God, confirming his mission and role in life. Mark’s account is very straight forward – Jesus goes to John – John baptizes Jesus – the Holy Spirit descends – the Voice from heaven is heard. Following baptism Jesus is immediately sent by the Spirit off into the desert where he will be tempted by Satan. Jesus was not baptized for the remission of sin. He was not baptized for the special plan for him and wanted to validate that role through the events that occurred.

Centuries before, the prophet Isaiah prepared the people for the coming of the Savior. In today’s reading from Isaiah the Lord called the people to “come to the water” and “seek the Lord.” God’s Living Word would come to the earth to do his will and achieve God’s purpose. The Letter of John reminds us that “whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.”

Each of us, through the sacrament of Baptism, has been called to be a person of faith. Each of us has been invited to “come to the water” and to “seek the Lord.” Perhaps no one heard God call out on the day we were baptized, yet, we became the beloved sons and daughters of the Father. We are called to be God’s special children. We are called to do all that we can to be sure that His message goes out through all the earth. We are called to hear that we can be sure that His message goes out through all the earth. We are called to hear that same voice say to us: “You are my beloved son (or daughter); with you I am well pleased.” May we live our lives as beloved children of God. May we reject sin, be faithful to the Gospel, and always point the way to Jesus.

