

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, January 12, 2025
Baptism of the Lord
Cycle C

Imagine a world where our identity is not determined by accomplishments, possessions, or public opinion – a world where we can confidently say, “I am loved simply because of who I am.” Our identity is not defined by external things but by God’s unchanging love for us.

This is exactly the truth proclaimed by the **Baptism of the Lord** – the feast we celebrate today. In today’s gospel passage, we witness Jesus stepping into the waters of the Jordan. Though sinless, he submits to baptism to reveal a profound truth: God’s love declares who we are. At his baptism, a voice from heaven proclaims: “You are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased.” This was not just for Jesus. This voice echoes in the life of every baptized Christian, declaring: “You are my beloved child; with you, I am well pleased.

At the Jordan, Jesus’ baptism reveals his mission and identity as God’s beloved Son. But more than this, his baptism sanctifies the waters for all of us. It opens the way for every person to step into this identity as beloved children of God. This means baptism is not just a ritual; it’s a transformation. In baptism, God says to each of us: “You are named, claimed, and loved. You belong to me.”

Through this sacrament, we share in Christ's sonship and mission. We become God's beloved, not because of anything we have done but because of who he is. Henri Nouwen reflects that the great spiritual battle of our time is believing in God's unconditional love for us.

The world offers us counterfeit identities:

- ***"You are what you do."***

- ***"You are what you have."***

- ***"You are what others think about you."***

Living by these lies makes our sense of worth fragile and conditional. When success fades, when possessions are lost, or when people's opinions turn negative, we are left questioning our value. Yet, the deepest truth of our identity remains: We are God's beloved. What does it mean to live as God's beloved? When we live as God's beloved, we are freed to love as God loves. Knowing that our identity is rooted in the Father's love, we are no longer consumed by selfish ambition or paralyzed by fear of failure. We can forgive freely because we know we are forgiven. We can give generously because we know we are blessed and cherished.

The Gospel message reminds us:

- **We are not our accomplishments. We are God's beloved.**

- **We are not our possessions. We are God's beloved.**

- **We are not our failures. We are God's beloved.**