

# **TU ES FILIUS MEUS**

*A Sermon for the Baptism of the Lord (B)*

*Texts: Is. 55:1-11; Ps Is. 12:2-3,4, 5-6; 1Jn 5: 1-9; Mark 1: 7-11.*

**“You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.”** Dear brothers and sisters, the feast we celebrate today deepens our understanding of and thanksgiving for, the Incarnation of the Son of God. We see the mystery unfolding before our eyes. The Lord Jesus comes to the Jordan and is baptised by John the Baptist. In the Gospel readings for Advent and Christmas we hear John the Baptist tell us many times that he is not the Saviour but the messenger, not the Christ his forerunner, not the Lord but his servant. Yet Jesus comes to be baptised by John. John has told us, “I am not worthy to stoop down and undo the straps of his sandals.” So, why did Jesus offer himself to be baptised by John? There are many reasons and they are all for our sake. Let us take three for our instruction. Jesus chose to be baptised by John for the same reason that he chose to become a man among human beings. One: he chose to become one with us in all things except sin so that we can become one with him in eternal happiness freed from our sins. In doing this he fulfilled the will of the Father. Two: he wanted to teach us a lesson in humility. For the sinless Son of God did not need any baptism. St Matthew tells us that John the Baptist protested when Jesus came to him, “It is I who need baptism from you, yet you come to me.” (Matt. 3:14). But he wants to “fulfil all that righteousness demands” (Matt. 3:15). Thus the Baptist was edified by the Lord who humbled himself and shared the rite with sinners. Three: he wanted to teach us an unforgettable lesson on our own baptism.

When John baptised other people who came to him, their sins were washed in the Jordan. But when he baptised Jesus, the Jordan was sanctified by the sinless One who was baptised in it. And our hope for salvation resides in the One who consecrated himself for our sake (Cf. John 17: 19). John baptised people with water for repentance. But the Lord Jesus baptised us with the Holy Spirit. In Christ we have been sanctified in baptism. We were baptised into him and have become members of his Body, the Church. Since the priests who baptised us acted *in persona Christi capitis*, Christ is the true One who has baptised us with the Holy Spirit.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, the feast we celebrate reminds us of our dignity as Christians. We bear the sign of the Cross of Christ, the seal of our salvation. For when we were baptised we were baptised into his death and will share in the glory of his resurrection. Our baptism does not move us away from this world to somewhere else. But it separates us from all that is worldly. We live in this present world that shows frequent signs of the darkness of sin and unbelief. But our vocation is to be the light of the world. We live side by side with those who do not believe in Christ. But our mission is to bear witness for our Lord who took our place in the Jordan and on the Cross of Calvary. We constantly face trials and temptations. But we are strengthened by the Lord Jesus “who was tempted in everyway that we are apart from sin” (Heb. 4: 16).

Let us therefore call to mind the day of our baptism and thank the Lord for his mercies. Most of us celebrate the anniversary of our natural birth – our birthdays. But we hardly remember the day we were born anew in the Spirit. As we rejoice in the Lord today, let us thank him for his goodness and love. Let us also thank our parents and Godparents and all who helped us to become Christians.

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