

## HOMILY FOR THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Scripture reveals that God makes things happen when water is involved. Perhaps it is because that in a desert, the gift of water is the gift of life and God is always for life. The Old Testament people understood water as symbolic of God's teachings – their Torah.

John baptised with a water of repentance for people who had fallen from the teachings of God. The appeal in the first reading from Isaiah is an appeal to a people in exile to commit themselves to God's teachings which come at no cost and yet, are more valuable than anything you might buy with money.

Jesus, the one without sin, is baptised in water, becoming both immersed in God's teachings and also, in the very human experience of a world affected by sin.

The word, 'Baptism' means 'to dip' – to 'immerse' as you would with a dish in a sink. Jesus is embraced by both God and humanity at his Baptism, just as he had been at his birth. His Baptism in the Jordan brings a very public revelation from heaven itself – "Here is God's Son, God's beloved upon whom God's favour rests."

Of course, his crucifixion will build on that even more when he dies our human death by which we come to see the true reality of God's perfect love – the purpose of his teachings.

When we were baptised, we also received from God what Jesus received. By water and the Holy Spirit, our Baptism immersed us in the divine life whilst also recognising our immersion within the realities of human life in all its brokenness.

In the second reading, John reminds us that we are begotten of God as Jesus is begotten of God. Through Baptism, our divine nature is publicly revealed by our belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and our love of God and our love for others.

Our immersion in the divine, is our immersion in love, even while we live in this world with all its troubles.

This past week we have witnessed acts of dissension and disorder within societies. One Church denomination in one country has refused to adhere to the restrictions of their government. We witnessed the disorder which occurred in Washington and, in Queensland, grumbling has once again become a response to our current lockdown. It seems that we are not always good at being immersed in this world of trouble.

Over the years, I have heard the idea that Jesus was some kind of radical dissident – a rebel who refused to bend to order.

However, Jesus never supported rebellion and disorder, even though the Priests, Pharisees and Scribes accused him of such. It is probably why the Apostle Paul had to remind the Church to respect civil authority.

What Jesus came to bring was a new order based upon God's teachings as he presented them. This order was not aggressive and condemning but, was revealed in love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – the fruits of the Spirit by whom we are baptised.

Jesus' order is about being a certain kind of person in a world where people lean towards disorder for their own selfish desires and hence, ignore the vulnerable and powerless. Interestingly, it was the vulnerable and powerless whom Jesus chose to stand with.

This was both the divine and the human immersion. Jesus identified with the lepers, the disabled and diseased, the sinners, prostitutes and tax collectors and all those who were considered disruptions to the perfection of the nation of Israel.

This is the same divine immersion in which Christ is at work today. We believe that he is in our suffering and suffering with us but, we believe that his order of love and unselfish action is the call to all Christians who long for a better world and one which is ordered – Christ's ordering.

Let us remember the water of our Baptism and the divine nature we have received in our human nature.

“Who can overcome the world?” John asks in the second reading. Only the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God and came by water, blood and the Spirit. The very realities of our Eucharist and, of our human bodies.