

Homily **The Baptism of the Lord** (13.1.19)

“You are my son, my daughter, my beloved.
My favour rests on you”.

We hear that voice deep in our hearts
in moments of great faith and profound prayer.

The gospel today puts before us very much a doctrinal appreciation of Jesus as the culmination of all the prophets that prophesied a liberator, a Messiah. And we see Jesus revealed as the Son of God. But the real question is,

"What's in it for us?"

All feasts point to something that's important for us. Indeed, the Church teaches that the Baptism of Jesus, which was a baptism of repentance administered by John, teaches us about Christian baptism that Jesus would instigate. And we see it very much so in the baptismal rite of an infant. The last action or symbol that the priest does in a baptism is to re-enact the movement and gesture of Jesus when he cured a deaf and dumb man. The priest says,

"The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak, may he soon touch your ears to receive his word and your mouth to proclaim his faith to the praise and glory of God the Father. Amen".

But when I do it, I'm just a bit... I touch the ears and I just slightly avoid the mouth because of all the slather and puke [laughter]. It's a bit off-putting. A little bit.

But, anyway, the point being is that that last symbol, I find very powerful. And I always keep it in, it says it can be omitted, but it's so important because we do an external ritual called baptism, but the real issue is the real miracle you can't see, which is praying for the gift of faith. And when you look through the gospels, Jesus so many times when he performed miracles and gave an explanation or a commentary, he was saying,

"You think this is great, but the really great thing is the thing you didn't see. Like the forgiveness of sins. Or the restoration back to the community of an outcast. Or restoring someone in their relationships with others". These were the real miracles, Jesus said, the things that don't have tangible wonders attached to them. But his power of miracles pointed to a deeper miracle, of faith and trust.

And so that brings us full circle back to ourselves and our own baptism. Because the real issue here is, and I don't know whether you noticed, it also comes at the end of this account by Luke. We often think this voice we say came when he was baptised, but it actually says, if you read it very carefully,

"And while Jesus, after his own baptism, was at prayer".

It's then we hear the voice,

'This is my Son'.

And that's another powerful symbol, because faith and prayer go hand and in hand. When we get faith, we need to pray to be in communion with God. And it's with those two gifts, faith and prayer, that we many times or sometimes or occasionally, glimpse that revelation for us. That the truth about Jesus' baptism is also given to us,

"You are my son, my daughter, my beloved. My favour rests on you".

We hear that voice deep in our hearts in moments of great faith and profound prayer. That God looks upon us as he looks upon Jesus as his only son. And there in the second reading you had Saint Paul's letter to the Titus, all the practical implications of that. Once we realise our status and dignity in Christ before God, then it follows that we should practice those virtues.