

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Homily – January 9, 2011

10:00 AM and 12 Noon Liturgies

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There is a wonderful story about a young man who was dating a very attractive lady. One day after church the two went for a picnic. The young man had made arrangements to rent a rowboat. His plan was to row to a small island on their favorite lake and enjoy a lunch which he himself had prepared.

Since he had been unaccustomed to making lunches, he had forgotten to pack a number of things. His attractive friend said, “It might be nice if we had some salt, ketchup and napkins.” Without hesitation the young man got into the boat and rowed back to shore to get the missing items. This routine occurred twice more that afternoon—he rowed back to shore to retrieve items that she had requested. By the end of the extremely warm day, he had perspired so much that his good suit was soaked.

That afternoon he realized something. He realized that there had to be a better way. The man’s name was Clarence Evinrude. Later that evening he designed the world’s first outboard motor. An industry was born because a young man had fallen head over heels for a young woman who kept making requests of him. I will add she later became his wife.

Clarence Evinrude realized that there must be a better way.

What happened to Clarence Evinrude is what we call an *Aha! Moment*. An *aha! moment* is a moment of realization—the *aha!*, the time of an epiphany, a time when the light goes on.

Today’s commemoration of the Baptism of Jesus is an *aha! moment*, a moment of realization and epiphany in the life of Jesus.

After Jesus was baptized and he came up from the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him and a voice came from the heavens saying, “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*” A dramatic moment in the life of Jesus. A time of realization if you will. An *aha!* experience.

How important those moments are in our life.

Let me ask you about some epiphanies that may have occurred in your life. When was it that you first realized the majesty of God? Was it the beauty and grandeur of creation that first evoked that realization?

When was it that you first realized the majesty of God? Perhaps it was the birth of your first child. What greater miracle in all of creation is there than the birth of a new human being?

As we watch that child learn to smile and to make sounds, then to talk and to walk, and finally to grow into a mature person, we are led to a dramatic realization that there is more to life than mere physics and chemistry. Behind creation stands a Creator. When was it that you first realized the majesty of God?

A second question.

When was it that you realized that you are God's own child?

Jesus heard a voice from the heavens say, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." And did he not teach us to pray "Our Father"? For I too am a child of God and so too are you.

The great British writer, C. S. Lewis, was fearful of giving in to the demands of God, but finally there came that moment of realization, that epiphany. He writes, "That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in and admitted God was God and knelt and prayed." C. S. Lewis, who has influenced so many people around the world, came reluctantly to God, and the world has greatly been blessed because of him.

Another author, Henri Frederic Amial, had a great insight. "We dream alone. We suffer alone. We die alone. We inhabit the last resting place alone. But there is nothing to prevent us from opening our solitude to God. And so what was an austere monologue becomes a dialogue."

How is it with your life? Is it still an austere monologue? It need not be. It can be a rich and beautiful dialogue between yourself and God.

Many years ago some doctors in an Ohio penitentiary performed an experiment. They believed that an operation on a man's brain would change him and rid him of his criminal tendencies. A prisoner in that prison submitted to the operation. But the operation was a failure. The man was released from prison, but soon he was back in again for forgery. In order for a person to be changed, he or she must have a changed heart.

When was it that you first realized the majesty of God? When was it that you first realized that you are God's own child?

Perhaps, for some, it has happened just now. If so, pray this prayer:

*Lord, you are God.
I need you.
I can't make it on my own.
I need you to change my heart,
my priorities, change my purpose
for living.
Help me to bear the image of your
Son in whose name I pray.*

Amen

