

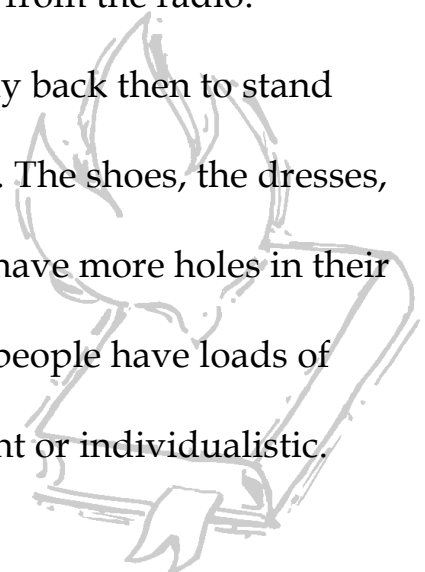
Homily
Baptism of the Lord - C

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
January 12-13, 2019

Is 40: 1-5, 9-11
Ps 104: 1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30
Tit 2: 11-14; 3:4-7
Lk 3: 15-16, 21-22

I know this may come as quite a shock for all of you, but have you ever noticed that they used to do things a little bit differently seventy-five years ago than they do today? Seventy-five years ago, you were considered radical if you listened to Jimmy Dorsey or Glenn Miller. Sixty years ago, Elvis Presley was considered radical. Parents would get upset if you brought this music from Satan into the house. Fifty years ago, it was the Beatles. Forty years ago, it was disco and the Village People. Thirty years ago, it was New Kids on the Block and Milli Vanilli. Twenty years ago it was MC Hammer, ten years ago was Britney Spears and today my head spins on what I hear from the radio.

You might notice that people acted differently back then to stand apart as much as people dress differently today. The shoes, the dresses, the pants. Sometimes people in today's society have more holes in their ears than I have in my head. I notice that some people have loads of tattoos on their bodies- people like to be different or individualistic.



People like to break the molds of society so that they can stand out and be recognized from the masses. They like to be themselves, recognized as radical individuals in society. Whether it be 50, 500 or 5,000 years, or the history of our civilization, people are people and want to be recognized for their individuality and achievements in life.

Have you ever noticed that in the midst of this all, that Catholicism has become radical and unique in its own right? Have you noticed that the values of Catholicism and Christianity are no longer part of the mainstream anymore? Have you noticed that our society kind of goes against the values of Catholicism, in the way they treat others or take care of themselves, or live in a state of anger rather than a state of love? Have you noticed that every so often, those same negative values of society permeate the way we ourselves treat others and that we sometimes end up becoming that which we loathe?

Yes, being Catholic means to be a little bit different, a little bit more loving, a little bit more radical. Put the title "Catholic" in front of yourself and people might say, "Oh my goodness, you're *Catholic!* That

means you have to go to church on Sunday and follow a bunch of rules that no one believes anymore!" They're right - who wants to go to church on Sunday when you can sleep and have a free day and all that good stuff? And when someone does wrong to you, of course you should hold a grudge and never forgive them- that is the way of the world. Who in their right mind would go against the grain of society and live that kind of life when there is all that power and fame and lust in the world? I want to be myself! I don't want to be Catholic, they might say.

Yes, being a Catholic has a stigma to it, it makes us different and it makes us unique. And to this I say, what is so wrong with that? If people can dress and act and do things that are bizarre in today's society, why can't the Catholics love and serve and be unique in their own right? Why is it ok to be different and scandalous rather than being different and full of God's love?

Today's gospel tells us that being a Catholic does make a difference and will put you apart from other people. And in a world of individuals

where being unique seems to be the trend, then we must be unique. We must be different so that the faith may survive. We need to break through the mainstream and live this radical life of love. Being Catholic means that we have made a promise, a promise at baptism, to go the extra mile for other people, to offer the extra compliment or to offer the smile or to challenge others to follow the way of Christ in the world. It means to donate a little more when we have the resources or work a little more so that the poor and helpless may have a means of hope. To be Catholic is to do things out of the ordinary.

Jesus modeled this service for us. Some people might wonder why Jesus would endure such laborious work for our sake. Since he is God, this Christ could have easily enjoyed the eternal rest that one can find in the kingdom of heaven. In fact, John the Baptist in today's reading even questions why our Lord would need to be baptized in preparation for his ministry - the fact is, Jesus does not need to be baptized, he does not need to serve or work. Jesus is the only person in the history of creation

that does not need to work for a living and yet still he is baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist. Why?

The answer to this question sets the model and example for us to understand the kind of effort we need to accomplish in this world in order for us to find this eternal rest to heaven as well. As an adult teaches the child through their example of life, so this Christ teaches us how to find God through his. It is through his example of baptism that we learn about the gift of the water and new life. It is through his example of serving the poor and the needy that we learn to do the same. It is through his dying on the cross that we learn to sacrifice our own lives, even to the death, for the salvation of those around us.

The example that this Jesus the Christ sets forth for us is the lesson of humility that is the key theme that influences all of our liturgical seasons. By entering the world in a manger, our Lord humbly enters an existence that welcomes both the poor and the rich, an existence worthy of both shepherds and kings. By becoming baptized, our Lord humbles himself to someone else, someone lesser, presenting himself not as a

king that rules or even as an equal but rather as a servant who is willing to bend to his knee and wash the feet of those he could easily raise or destroy. The example that our Lord sets for us in Matthew's gospel is one that is often embraced by the outsider but taken for granted by those in the Gospel that become too comfortable in their own interpretation of the faith that they choose not to learn about the ways that God has set forth for them.

We have a responsibility as Catholics to live this radical life of love starting at baptism to live this Christmas message every day of the year. We have celebrated the feast, we opened our presents, and Christ now tells us that we need to live it. When we follow through with this promise and live the Catholic life, we then understand Christmas and this unique message that Christ has offered to us. When we don't, especially when we have learned the message, then we move far away from God.

The message of Christmas is to love. The message is to live the promises of baptism. Do you believe in God and Jesus, do you believe in

the Church and the saints. Most of all, *do you believe in loving one another?*

In a minute, we will renew our vows of baptism. Let us be unique and live those vows every moment of our lives. Let us bring that love to the altar, share it with each other, and offer it to the people that we meet.

This is our prayer.