

The Baptism of the Lord
January 9, 2022
“Loving with God’s Love”

Is 40:1...11
Tit 2:11...3:7
Lk 3:15...22

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

The deepest need of every human being is to be loved – and to love in return. There is no other human emotion or reality that is more important than this. Infants and children who are not loved, may atrophy, die, or become badly damaged as human beings.

Not to be loved adequately, can lead to almost every kind of obsession or addiction imaginable. On the other hand, people who have always been loved are, usually, well integrated human beings. There is a wonderful balance in their lives. And they see life itself and reality with a very broad perspective.

Furthermore, those who know they are loved never seem to lose hope – no matter how difficult life becomes. They do not give up – They do not capitulate to the cries of the culture or to the forces of evil in the world. Because anyone who is truly loved on the human level has been touched in their deepest being with the infinite love of God!

It can also be said that unless we love with a truly godly human love, our love for others will always be tainted with selfishness. It will also be less than what the person we love truly needs!

Exiled in Babylon, the Chosen People had not felt the love of God for many years. They had been there for 2 or 3 generations. They were suffering from the paganism all around them. They were losing hope – as well as their faith in the one true God.

Consequently, Isaiah told them not to despair – not to lose faith – not to join the pagan culture in which they were immersed. He told them that God loved them. God had not forgotten them. They had more than paid for the sins of their forebears.

God had a wonderful plan. It would begin with their restoration and return to Jerusalem and the Promised Land. It would come into sharp relief when God would make His appearance in their midst one day. And when He came, He would bring the power of love – as well as salvation – to all who would believe Him and accept Him!

After their restoration, the People waited for centuries for God's coming as the Christ – as the Messiah. But they became selfish in their love for others and for God. They wanted a Christ who would serve their own selfish needs. Sadly, they limited the extent of God's love for them to the passing things of this world alone!

When God finally appeared, He did so in completely human form. Only John the Baptist recognized the God-Man at the Jordan. Jesus was sinless – He needed no baptism of conversion. Nevertheless, Jesus manifested his love by taking upon himself the punishment for our sins. His baptism was an immersion into our world of sin, suffering, and pain.

Yet, Jesus was more than what he appeared to be – a carpenter from Nazareth. He was someone, infinitely great, who would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire! Jesus would bring us the Holy Spirit of God. And that Spirit is Love Personified. It is the Love of the Father for the Son – and the love of the Son for the Father – forevermore!

Moreover, that Love would sear our souls with divine fire! It would purify our own loves. It would make us less unworthy of what God planned for us in His Kingdom. It would help us to burn away our sins – and our attachment to sin. For all human sin is love gone awry – or love for ungodly things!

St. Paul takes up this theme in his Letter to Titus. He tells us that “the grace of God has appeared”. “It has saved us all.” “It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires.” “It enables us to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in our present age.” And we can live this way by living each moment expecting the appearance of God's glory. That Glory will be shown forth when Jesus comes for us personally – or for the world on its last day!

Brothers and Sisters, wealth, power, pleasure – all the things of this world – will never satisfy anyone, no matter how much we love them. Our need for love is infinite. Our love can never be fulfilled by created things. Only Uncreated Love – God's Love – can ever fulfill us – because it is unlimited and everlasting. We will continue to struggle to love in truly godly ways. But the very fact of our struggling is the sign that we are on the right path as disciples.

So, let us never lose hope or give up. Jesus – the Christ – has come and is always with us to save us. The Holy Spirit is there to guide us in our endeavors to love. Let us pray that we learn to recognize the godly love that others have for us. And may our love for others always be a sharing of God's power, grace, and love!

Amen. Msgr. Russell G. Terra