

Baptism of the Lord - A - 2020
Isa.42.1-4,6-7 /// Acts 10.34-38 /// Matthew 3.13-17

→A few weeks ago a local television station posted it's "question of the day" asking...
"when should Christmas lights be taken down and put away?"

→and as you might expect there were a variety of answers...one person replied...
"the day after Christmas," another said... "within two or three days after Christmas."

→still another said... "not until New Year's" and finally one person said... "I like the
lights...I leave them up all winter long."

→the question is pretty open-ended...

→and when it comes to outdoor lighting and all the trimming that surrounds the
holiday season...we each have our individual preferences

--our own sense of decorum—...about when to pull the plug on our
Christmas decorations...

→but if **we as church** were asked the same question...our response would not
only surprise retailers...it would surprise anyone who gives the months of November and
December exclusive rights to Christmas lights...

→**as the church**...we would say that today's feast...the Baptism of the Lord...would be
the right time to put away our lights and trees.

→the poinsettias and manger scene that we still see in church today are still here
for a reason and it's not due to a lazy or procrastinating environment committee....

→rather our Christmas decorations remind us that the Feast of the
Incarnation...celebrates not only the birth of Jesus but also his entrance into the human family

→and today with the Baptism of the Lord...Jesus enters more fully into our family

→a family that widens over time..

→it begins with the Holy Family.....shines with the Epiphany...grows with the help of John the Baptist....and widens with the call of the disciples and the followers of Jesus thereafter.

→we also know that the Lord's baptism ...which we celebrate today...was no ordinary baptism.

→when Jesus was born on this earth at Christmas...he became one of us and identified himself with us

→and today, as we bring our Christmas season to a close,...on this, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord...we find Jesus doing that once again...

→identifying with us so that he could be just like us....becoming one with us

→[when you think about it].....Jesus had no reason in the world to be baptized...he wasn't a sinner...he had no cause for repentance...and he didn't need to be saved

→**he didn't need** to undergo baptism and yet he did...in order to show us just how much we are loved by God

→...to become one with us...to identify with us

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→I see the baptism of Jesus as an act in which Jesus takes upon himself our burdens and worries.....

→....an act by which he shows how complete his identification **with us is**

→the baptism of Jesus begins his ministry...it is the event which launches the "proclaiming of the good news of salvation"

→...it is the start of his career that brings about our redemption

→[i.o.w.] Jesus begins his ministry among us by **identifying with us**

→by being one of us and doing as we have been commanded to do

→taking upon himself....the sign of repentance and righteousness.... that we are to take upon ourselves

→and when he did so...he received power...

---the power of healing,

---the power of saving...

---the power of the Holy Spirit

→our ministry...our power...our ability to heal and be healed...the Spirit that is **in us**...begins in the same place as Jesus.....with our baptism

---there is power in the sacrament we have all taken part in

--there is power in doing what Jesus did...in believing in him....in taking care of people...in living the gospel message....

----and that power is the power of the Spirit and the power of the Word.

the baptism of the Lord...and his identification with us began his ministry...just as our baptism and our identification with the Lord began our ministry

→and now it is up to us to continue this ministry we all share in...this ministry that we have been all called to

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→this new year can be **full** of the **power** of God in our lives.....if we believe and accept the ministry of our baptism...

→at Christmas...the love of God put on a human face...his beloved Son

→in baptism we celebrate that human face...being made into our faces...and declaring to us that we are his beloved sons and daughters...

→that is what this feast of the Lord's baptism celebrates...

→that is what our baptism is all about

→and that is worth keeping up the Christmas trees and lights