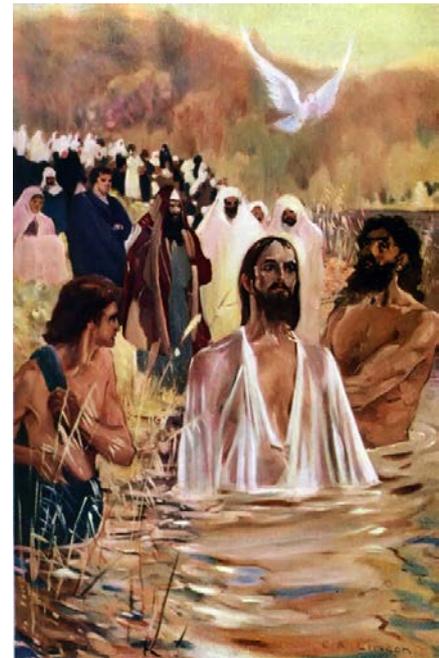


Beloved of God

(Gospel: Mk 1:7-11)



The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord brings about the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of "Ordinary Time" in the Liturgical cycle. The Scriptures and Liturgies of Ordinary Time will remind us of the ongoing implications of our Baptism: that moment when God seized each one of us, made us His own in a special way, anointed us with His Spirit, and commissioned us to continue the mission of Jesus. This will be a time when we are again seized by God, anointed by the Spirit, declared to be His beloved - to be light - to bring justice - to heal the bruised - to help keep

There are some hard facts about Christian spirituality: You have to

"let go of" something in order to gain something else. You have to turn away from things that are destructive, you have to out into the desert and purge yourself, you have to go under the water and come up - and leave the sins in the water; you have to remove the obstacles on the path...

If we can "let go" then Christ will be born, the beloved Child will emerge within us. All of us are bruised reeds and smoldering wicks.

We are far from perfect, and rather consistently plagued by failure and selfishness. We are much too easily hurt, too easily discouraged. We fall short of expectations; we display our frailty like open wounds. Yet despite this, the Lord has confidently chosen us to complete His work. We need to realize that we are living in a sacred space, populated by a multitude of folks who - like us - desperately want to be faith-filled: who sometimes get defeated, who sometimes get battered by life and bested by trials, and yet somehow, throughout it all, still cling to their faith.

At Christmas time, we are reminded again that God has entered our lives. Now it is time for us to decide, to choose, to realize, to act, to change our hearts. We are the ones to rearrange the manger scene in our personal lives, to allow the Spirit to lead us, and to accept the challenging commitment to live the difficult and demanding message of the Gospel.

