

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

## Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord

If you embark on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, one place available for a visit is a spot along the Jordan River where, it is believed, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Whether this place was the *exact* location of this important event in the life of Jesus is not that important. What is important is that it happened and is remembered. Scholars say this was a turning point in the life of Christ. It was as a result of that act of being baptized that Jesus was affirmed as the Beloved Son of God. He was chosen by God to go forth and begin the arduous task of announcing and establishing God's reign on earth.

## A Gospel Word for the Home

### Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

In the humanity of Jesus, there were real human needs. Unless that was so, Jesus would not be human like we are. But he was. That's the Gospel truth. He experienced worries and disappointment as well as joy and excitement. He is not made of plastic, nor did he fail to touch the ground: the same ground we must walk on. He struggled with temptation and could be pulled down by failure. Okay, he never sinned, but that is not to deny he wasn't human *in every other way*. So take heart in the knowledge that Jesus went through pretty much what everyone else does.

Some suggest that the event of his Baptism was an eye-opener for him. "You are loved and get on the road and tell everyone else the same." Saint John the Baptist affirms that Jesus is the one sent from God. "Follow him not me." Some think that many of the early disciples of Jesus were once connected with John the Baptist. It's clear from the Gospels that John was totally okay with this. In fact, he encouraged it.

### Thought for the Week

Jesus' baptism was an act of humility. Humility is a virtue, an attitude worth pursuing. It doesn't mean we are worthless or we need to bow and scrape. With humility we live in the truth that we are totally dependent on God. We are not self-enclosed or in charge of everything that happens to us. We cannot control what happens. Like Jesus, we can expect surprises along our way. Maybe the sky won't open for us as a deep voice announces that we are beloved, but there will be other ways for us to learn the same truth. We are beloved. That's stamped on us right from the beginning. There's an old tale that says that the indentation on our face between our upper lip and nose is God's "fingerprint" that God impresses there while saying, "I love you." Maybe so.

## Parent Survival

Continuing this same thought, there's a lot being said today about how distracted we can be in today's noisy culture. We're plugged into sounds from a thousand sources. And some people can't endure silence. They always want some background music. Technology comes to the rescue. Ten thousand songs stored in a little device that can be carried in your pocket. Nevertheless, it is also noted that loneliness is pandemic. So is a feeling of being worthless. We don't feel loved.

The challenge is to hear the messages of love that are mostly silent. Our faith is rooted in God's word that is a word of love. God doesn't give up on us so if we don't hear this the first time, it will be repeated. The feeling and conviction that we are loved (and therefore lovable) is something we all crave. Like water, it's needed for survival. The real issue is not whether God is communicating God's love for us but whether we are listening when God says it.

## Car or Meal Talk

Let's discuss ways in which we say, "I love you" with actions rather than words.

## One-Line Prayer

Loving Father, open our hearts to hear the many ways you communicate your love for us. Amen.