

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Baptism of the Lord

Jesus begins his public life by being baptized by John. It's worthwhile to ponder this event. After all, John baptized with water and repentance. It was specifically for sinners. So what was Jesus doing there in the first place? He was the sinless one. He was the one whom John had announced as "the one" who was coming, "the one" much greater than John. Jesus was coming to baptize with the fire of God's Spirit. Nevertheless, there was Jesus, most likely standing in line alongside some rather unsavory characters, wanting to be baptized.

One of the primary points of the Gospel reading is to affirm that God in Jesus came to share all aspects of life with us. In many ways, the human Jesus was somewhat of an ordinary person. He ate and drank like others. He enjoyed a good time, and on occasion became pretty angry over certain "problems" that he encountered. He had close friends, both women and men. He cried when his friend died. He seemed especially disturbed by people using religion as a means to secure power over others. All of these are very human traits. Maybe a big part of the Gospel reading is to show that every part of every seemingly ordinary human life is important. Participating fully in the relationships and demands of everyday human life, taking care of others, especially children, is most pleasing to God who created human life.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Mark 1:7–11

To continue with this thought, we seem to approach Jesus' life in one of two ways. Some, for instance, want to highlight what's dramatic, miraculous or spectacular in his life. In today's Gospel reading, such an approach would highlight the heavens opening and the booming voice of God filling the Jordan Valley with the words, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Visualize the astonished crowds, wondering what's happening. If people had cameras, they would have been taking lots of pictures.

Others look for what's common or ordinary. They would notice that the Gospel reading suggests that only Jesus was witness to this heavenly event. Maybe it happened primarily to affirm Jesus in his humanity, to show that he was involved in something very special, a work of God. Right after this brief event at the riverside, the Gospel reading said that he was prompted to go to the wilderness in solitude, a place where he could spend some time trying to piece together this puzzle about himself. In other words, he had a personal experience of feeling God's approving call, but had to understand exactly what this entailed. Many of us have similar moments. We experience a hint of what God wants of us, but we need time and solitude to figure out all the rest.

Parent Survival

So here's a proposal. Take some time to think about your vocation as a parent. God has called you to this. But do you experience it as *God's personal call to you*? Do you value the ordinary routine things you do as a parent? They say that the job of being a parent is endless. You can never retire. It's a lifelong commitment.

The Catholic Church often talks about vocations from God, but for the most part, it's about a vocation to be a priest, nun or religious brother. The Church doesn't deny that being a parent is a vocation, but it is not often highlighted. Parents need to start that conversation with each other and keep it going, so that more people will realize the importance and value of parenting as a *calling*. Think of the parents of Jesus. Were not their roles very important? So too are ours. God's love touches all God's children and the first place they experience that love is through their parents. That's pretty significant!

Car or Meal Talk

Jesus received a message from God that he was beloved to God. Talk about times when we each felt loved. You can include God in the conversation.

One-Line Prayer

Gracious and Loving God,
Help us appreciate the wonderful ordinary moments of our lives.
Amen.