

The Baptism of Jesus, this event was huge in his life. We have the infancy stories and the account of his being lost when he was about 12 and then silence for about 18 years.

What was he doing? How did he spend his days? We don't know. We assume that he worked as a carpenter, became well acquainted with the lives of ordinary people, studied the sacred Scriptures, went to the synagogue.

Now comes this dramatic event, ushered in by his baptism, a new beginning, a new career as an itinerant preacher, a preacher of change. Jesus leaves a relatively easy, comfortable life, leaves it for a life lived on the edge, an unsettled life, a life dependent on the goodwill of his disciples and the hospitality of the women followers. "The son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

Ultimately, he will be abandoned by those who had been his closest friends and will die on a cross.

You know how difficult change can be, from elementary to high school, to college, to a job, from single to married, to having children, to a new home, to growing old, to grieving the death of a loved one, to moving on. These are all wrenching moments, stretching us.

How did Jesus face this change in his life? Not alone, that is the most important thing to remember, not alone. The Father was with him, close by encouraging, supporting.

He heard the voice: "You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased." I have this mental picture: the father giving his son a pat on the shoulder- I am proud of you, you have made a good choice, a difficult choice, a choice that will mean rejection and death but will mean the salvation of the world. I am with you all the way.

That voice from heaven must have been a great psychological boost to Jesus. God the Father approved of him, approved his new vocation that he was beginning and that was sealed and symbolized by his baptism.

What about us? What does our baptism mean for us? For those of us baptized as infants, clearly, we did not think much about it until we became adults. We surely did not see it as a dramatic moment, the way Jesus did.

Do we now, when reflecting on it as adults? Our parents committed us to living the Catholic Christian way of life. A question—do we now as adults endorse the commitment they made?

I hope we can say Yes. If our baptism is to bring about change, even at this stage of our lives, we are going to need some help. We can be assured of the help of the Father, through the working of the Holy Spirit.

We also are God's beloved children. We are not alone. We may not see the Holy Spirit descend in bodily form of a dove.

No, the Holy Spirit will be seen in the persons of other people, family, friends, fellow parishioners, who encourage us, support us spiritually and give us the good example of how a Catholic Christian should live.

The support of a vibrant Christian community, such as we have here, is so vital to the process of living a Christian life. We need to support one another, encourage one another.

It is so easy, and may I say satisfying (in a perverted way) to criticize.

I thank you for your support, your presence here today to pray with me. I thank all you parents who are here, week after week, with your children, giving them good example, not afraid to say: we are a family, we do things together and that includes church.

Later in life, your children will thank you for your faithfulness.

I urge you to take some quiet time to reflect on the great grace of your baptism.

I have suggested to you before to research the date of your Baptism, the date of your new birth in Christ.

Mine is Jan.18, just 6 days after I was born. I see you all doing the math. (Note: January 12 was his 88th birthday!)

The day of his Baptism made a huge difference in the life of Jesus, a profound change. May it be the same for us.

Towards the end of his life, at the Transfiguration, he heard the almost same words heard at his Baptism: "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased."

Again, the Father is giving his son a pat on the back. "I am proud of you, you have done my will, I will be with you to the end."

May we, having been faithful to our baptism, hear the same words of commendation, for we too are God's children.

May we as a community support one another as we make our best effort to live out our baptismal commitment, a commitment to follow the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.