

Baptism of our Lord – Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Holy Spirit Prayer

*O Holy Spirit who is light unto your children – may you enlighten us.
O Holy Spirit who gives never-ending grace – may you replenish us.
O Holy Spirit who is the fire of love – may you be born in our hearts.
O Holy Spirit who is Lord and giver of all – may you live within us.
As the clouds lessening our temptations
As the dew reviving our weariness
As fire purging the waste in our hearts
As we purify our Spirit
As the wind sending us out
As a dove turning our eyes to heaven
Amen.*

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

In just a couple of weeks we have jumped some 30 years in Jesus' life, from his birth, to The Epiphany and the visit of the Magi on January 6, to today, his Baptism. We have gone from infant to adult, from his birth to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, leaving out all of those intervening years.

We do have one account of Jesus as a 12 year-old in the temple, but even though we may have curiosity about what kind of child Jesus was—have you ever wondered if Jesus ever gave Mary a hard time—we won't

spend too much time there speculating. The Gospel writers want us to clearly see that Jesus was born, chosen and sent for a purpose. Today's celebration then, is to help us claim our own baptismal identity and see that we too are born, chosen and sent for a purpose.

Born. We just spent the 12 days of Christmas, from Christmas Day up to The Epiphany, echoing the hymn of the shepherds – “Glory to God in the highest.” I hope we discovered the message that Jesus' birth was no accident. It was a dramatic unfolding of a tapestry showing forth God's desire to be in relationship with all of creation.

Hear again the words of Isaiah: “...Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine...you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you...Do not fear, for I am with you...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” This is true for each of us and for all of us. One of our responsibilities as we claim our baptismal identity is to help each person among us discover that she or he was born for a purpose and is of infinite value, loved by God beyond our wildest imagination. In so doing you will discover that you too were born for a purpose. What might that be?

Chosen. "...when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'" In his baptism Jesus is beloved and God is well pleased, and he hasn't even yet started his ministry!! God's favor comes before he does anything.

Too often we go about life trying to earn favour, to prove our worth. Unfortunately we often feel like we have to do that with people, even those closest to us. I am here to tell you, however, that you do not have to do that with God! In baptism we already have God's favour. God is already pleased. When the water was poured over you at your baptism, God was saying– "you are my child, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We cannot impress God; we cannot earn God's love; we get no brownie points. The love is given and we are Christ's own forever. You were chosen for a purpose. What might that be?

Sent. This is Jesus' starting day, the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus was baptized to be sent. This is where the rubber hits the road, for we are baptized to be sent. It is what the word "apostle" means – "one sent." Our call, no different than that of Jesus himself, is to give our life, so deeply secure in the embrace of God that we will be resolute about bringing

healing, freedom and hope in collaboration with God's vision of justice for the world God has made.

In the birth of Jesus we might say that God hit the streets. We take our faith and go into the streets of our living. In that sense faith is more a verb than a noun. You will remember that Jesus asked if a city built on a hill can be hidden, or if you would light a lamp and put it under a basket so that no one could see that light. You are sent for a purpose. What might that be?

Faithfulness is meant to move us through life so that even when we find ourselves in darkness, and there is plenty of that to go around, we who are the beloved in God's Spirit will be a source of light to touch and change the world with God's love, mercy and forgiveness. Each of us must be able and willing to tell our faith story, just why it is we are disciples of Jesus, and why it matters. That's why we baptize and confirm. Our baptismal identity is to infuse everything we are and everything we do.

Jesus was born, chosen and sent for a purpose. You were born, chosen and sent for a purpose. The joy of life is in knowing it and living it if you have the courage and will to do so.