

**Homily for January 13, 2002
Baptism of the Lord**

By Father Charles Bowes

**Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Acts 10:34-38
Matthew 3:13-17**

As God's own children, we are to love as Jesus loves.

The baptism of Jesus took place thirty years after his birth, but it is celebrated at Christmastime, immediately after his birth, his incarnation. That is correct, for his baptism, too, belongs to the beginning – the beginning of God's incarnation in this world.

That incarnation is a wonderful event. It gives the final and ultimate assurance that God is with us. That incarnation was a slow process. It was not only a question of being born, but also a question of the further steps to be taken, the further initiation rites.

First he was presented for circumcision. He got his name. He was taken up. Then, as a boy of twelve, he went to the Temple. He got involved. He asked questions, he answered questions. He got embedded; he wanted to be involved. Every time I listen; every time you listen, it's going to cost me; it's going to cost you time, energy, involvement, and very often money. It eats at you, it needles you. The clearer things get, and the clearer you let things get, the more time it's going to cost, the more energy, the more of your personality, and the more of your money.

At the moment Jesus left Nazareth and stepped into the crowd, he got involved. Up to that moment, he had been hidden. They had been ignorant of him, and their ignorance had been his bliss. Up to that moment, he had been safe. Up to then, he had been secure. At the moment he stepped out into the open, he got involved. And, according to St. Matthew's Gospel, when he saw his son stepping out, God was so excited he couldn't keep his mouth shut. St. Matthew portrays God shouting through all the heavens and the sky: "This is my beloved son, here he is, watch him."

Jesus, revealed in that way, "betrayed" by God, fled into the wilderness, to come out again, of course, to carry the burden of his involvement. People did not leave him alone anymore. He got tired, very tired, and in the end, he was faithful to the inspiration which first moved him and even died on a cross.

His baptism, his stepping out into the crowd, was a deliberate decision to get involved, to rub shoulders with all the others, to be with the crowd, to be with sinners, to be with everyone.

That is not our vocation. It is not your vocation. It is not my vocation, not with all and everyone. That's impossible. But it definitely is our vocation to be involved with those who may and should claim us: our

children, those entrusted to us, those dependent on us, our direct neighbors, the people we meet on life's way. This is everyone's vocation.

But maybe, just maybe, for some of you, you may find yourselves engaged, energized by the vocation of service Jesus offers in the priesthood and religious life. That's how I became a priest – not because I was especially close to God or holy, but because I had questions I needed to answer – questions about the meaning and purpose of life, and in the effort to answer those questions I found happiness and fulfillment in the Catholic priesthood.

Whatever path God calls us to walk, whatever our vocation, we, like Jesus, will make commitments, become involved in a way that will cost us everything- and in this way we each will live out our baptism, God's choice of us and ours of God.

Let us pray: Your voice, Lord, is mighty and majestic. May we who are baptized into the death of your Son be raised with him in glory. May we go about doing good in his name, for he is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

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we are to love as Jesus loves.