

In the 3 Readings we all heard today,
a word kept coming to me that I would like to share:
and that word is *identify*. *Identify*.

It means to recognize someone or to prove who that someone is.
An example. Even the smallest baby can identify its mother
by the sound of her voice.

In the 1st Reading from the Prophet Isaiah...

"Thus says the Lord. Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased."

Isaiah is *identifying* a servant
that has come to save Israel. *Identify*.

In the 2nd Reading from Acts,

Saint Peter spoke to the house of Cornelius
about how John the Baptist *identified* a particular man
named Jesus of Nazareth as being anointed by God
with the Holy Spirit & Power. *Identify*.

And in the Gospel, "A voice came down from heaven.

You are my Beloved Son. With you I am well pleased."

God himself *identifies* that man who is Jesus,
standing in the water with a dove hovering above him, as his Son.

Would that not send chills up and down your spine
if you heard that on the banks of the Jordan? *Identify*.

Let's look more into the readings to seek out the meanings of *identify*.

In the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah,
the people of Israel are in exile.

Not only are they physically exiled,
but their spirit is also exiled. They are broken.

They are not allowed to worship their God.

But Isaiah gives them hope. Isaiah proclaims,

"Here is my servant, my Chosen One,
upon whom I have put my spirit."

I think it is important to recognize
that in this reading God sent a servant,
someone who will stand with his people and encourage them.

The servant will bring justice to all nations
by reaching out and taking them by the hand.

God is telling us (you & me...right here & now)
that his servant son will take us individually by the hand
and bring us to salvation.

In our 2nd Reading from the Acts of the Apostles,
there are 2 important points to be made about Baptism.

First...Saint Peter was talking to Cornelius, who is a Roman Centurion.

Cornelius, therefore, is a Gentile...not a Jew.

Saint Peter makes the point that God shows no partiality.

Baptism is for Jews and Gentiles. Baptism is for Everyone.

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Cornelius and his entire household will be baptized by Saint Peter.
The second point is that it is God that anoints Jesus of Nazareth
with the Holy Spirit & Power.

And now for our Gospel Reading:

Here the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove
and God's voice from Heaven says, "You are my Beloved Son.
With You I am well pleased."

Jesus' Baptism has 2 realities.

First, Jesus is identified by his Father as his Son.

Therefore, he is God.

Second, Jesus is human and identifies with us;

Therefore, he is able to take our hands
and lead us to his Father.

In this reading John the Baptist identifies Jesus as God.

He says, "I baptize you with water,
but God baptizes you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

You come to do the will of your Father."

At this moment Jesus is embracing
the enormous weight of humanities sinfulness...

just as he will do so again and again on his way to the cross.

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Jesus was not washed by the water of the Jordan.

Rather, the water of the Jordan was washed by Jesus.

We are baptized by the same water of the Jordan

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that baptized Jesus because the Spirit

that descended on Jesus has also descended on us.

Our Baptisms here at St. Pius look almost the same as Jesus' Baptism.

We even have the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove above our font.

The font may not be a river but its water is always flowing

and thanks to Bob Kelly, our church caretaker, it always flows evenly.

At baptism, parents identify their child by name

and are asked what they want of God's Church.

"Baptism" is the answer.

Then the priest or deacon claims the child for Christ

with the Sign of the Cross...Father, Son, & Holy Spirit...

the same Trinity that was at the Jordan over 2000 years ago.

So, the Baptism of Jesus is a significant event for each one of us.

It is in Baptism that we see the hand of God reaching out to us.

It is in Baptism that we die and rise with Jesus.

It is in Baptism that we become members of the Church.

It is in Baptism that we become brothers and sisters of Jesus.

It is in Baptism that we are anointed priest, prophet, and king.

And it is in Baptism that we *identify* (please note) that we *identify*

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ourselves as members of *God's* family...

and will know the unconditional love of *God*, who is after all.....

He is our Father.