

# Baptism of the Lord, Year C

Br. Samuel Springuel

13 January, 2019

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading** Isaiah 40:1–5,9–11

**Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 104:1B–2,3–4,24–25,27–28,29–30

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** Titus 2:11–14;3:4–7

**Gospel** Luke 3:15–16,21–22

Who is Jesus?

In many ways this seemingly simple question is at the heart of the liturgical season, Christmastide, that we end today. We have experienced, and remembered, the birth of a child, a poor child with no apparent claim to fame at the moment of his birth. And yet, some two thousand years later we've taken the time out to remember and celebrate his birth once again. Who is this child, who is the man he will become, that makes him so important?

At the end of the Advent season we were given 7 answers in the great O antiphons: "Wisdom," "Lord," "Root of Jesse," "Key of David," "Rising Sun," "King of the Nations," and "Emmanuel." At the Christmas Vigil, besides repeating the name "Emmanuel," Matthew gave us the answers "Son of David, Son of Abraham," and "the Christ." At the Midnight Mass we heard Isaiah call him "Wonder-Counselor," "God-Hero," "Father-Forever," "Prince of Peace," while the Angels in Luke's gospel called him "savior," "Christ," and "Lord." At the Dawn Mass it was Isaiah's turn to use the title "savior" and at the Mass During the Day we heard John call him the "Word." Last week it was the turn of the Magi from Matthew's gospel who referred to Jesus as "the newborn king of the Jews." It seems that everywhere we turned during the Christmas season we got another answer to the question "who is Jesus?"

It should be no surprise, then, that today is no different; we get another answer to "who is Jesus." Indeed, it is God himself that gives us the answer.

So, who is Jesus?

Well, God's answer is different from the ones we've seen before. It is not about power. "King of the Jews," "King of the Nations," "God-Hero," we've seen plenty of those kinds of names. Power is something we tend to pay attention to. We look up to it, respect it, want it. When others have it, we take note and it can become the defining characteristic of how we think about that person. When we think of politicians, for instance, it is usually their office, and the power that they wield because of it, that first comes to mind when we are asked who they are. From the human perspective Jesus's power is an important part of who he is. Because Jesus is powerful: a healer, a wonder-worker, the Second Person of the Trinity. And we will hear all about that in the weeks to come. But this is not how God chooses to answer.

Who is Jesus?

God's answer also does not involve glory, fame, a place in history. "Rising Sun," "Wonder-Counselor," "Son of David, Son of Abraham," "Christ," these answers were about Jesus's glory. They looked to his place in history, what makes him unique, distinctive, better than anyone else. Such things are important to us, so it's not surprising that we would look for this sort of answer. We spend time, lots of time, and money, lots of money, just trying to stay abreast of the latest celebrity happenings. We pay attention to sports stars, actors, musicians, writers, anyone, really, who is famous, even if it just for being famous. And Jesus is famous. Perhaps not as a the child in a manger, but certainly in our day and age. His glory is blinding like the light of the rising sun, his words contain the most sublime counsel, he is the fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel, and the anointed one marked out for all eternity. But God does not answer in this way, not even with a prediction of the fame that Jesus would obtain.

Who is Jesus?

Well, since it's not about power or glory, perhaps a more mundane answer. Ask someone you've just met who they are and you'll often get a job title or description. We tend to define ourselves by what we do, at least in this country. Teacher, carpenter, lawyer, mechanic, all of these are jobs, things we do, and yet when asked, we say "I am a ... teacher, carpenter, lawyer, mechanic, or whatever." It's part of how we conceive of ourselves as persons. And we have seen answers like this applied to Jesus in the past few weeks too. "Savior" is the most obvious, Jesus is the savior come to redeem us from our sins. But "Wisdom" and "Word," these too are about what Jesus does. Jesus is the Word by which the universe is created, the Wisdom by which it is ordered. But this is not how God answers either.

So, who is Jesus?

God's answer is "Beloved Son." It is an answer embedded in relationship. Power, glory, utility, none of that matters. What matters to God is that Jesus is His Son and He loves him. "Son" is, in a sense, the modifier here. God's love is so complete that everything He is and everything that He has He shares with Jesus: makes him His son and heir. Anything less would be a betrayal of His love. All the rest, the human answers to who Jesus is, they simply do not matter. They're there, but they make no difference to how God answers the question "who is Jesus."

So, who is Jesus to you? How would you answer the question?