

January 12, 2020

**“Jesus Also”**

**By Edgar F. Solis**

**Intro- Illustration.** Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often, he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one he visited thought that he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the same food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, “I am your king!” The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn’t. Instead he said, “You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the same food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!”

How many times we think of Jesus or God as distant entities. For many they are beings that we only look to when we need compassion, protection or healing. This week we celebrate the baptism of Jesus.

**Bible Context.** From where did the practice of baptism come from? Let’s remember, **John the baptizer appears in the wilderness preaching a gospel of repentance, and** the Greek word for “repentance” here is *metanoia* (from *meta*, “change,” and *noia*, “mind”). Today we would say, “change of heart” or “change of life,” a reorientation in our existence. Accordingly, as a visible sign for this change, John uses baptism, an immersion-in-water rite in those days typically reserved for non-Jewish converts to Judaism. This baptism signifies the all-encompassing, fresh-

start character of conversion. Imagine the baptizer saying, *it's not just the outsiders that require conversion - we all do!* Many times we tend to think that it is the other who needs to change, the other that needs to adjust his life, existence, way of thinking, understanding, customs, habits, culture, etc. But the powerful message of the baptizer, the one that brought the revolutionary message of God to his generation, is that a new time is coming, a new day, a new era is at hand! We need to upgrade our systems! Change your minds, hearts and lives! Come and be baptized for the sake of forgiveness of sins - for God is coming near!

**Scripture:** It should never cease to amaze us that Jesus is baptized and yet it is astonishing. This Jesus, whom God will call **“my child, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” gets in line with the rest of us.** There is a powerful principle here, **Jesus also** was baptized. *“It’s an expression of the astonishing humility and solidarity of the Incarnation: in Jesus. God comes alongside us, even to the point of joining us in a rite of repentance and renewal.”* Instead of setting himself apart, Jesus is able to identify with our own brokenness...I have to confess that when I feel limited, intimidated by my own human brokenness...I do remember Jesus...the ultimate expression of humanity and divinity walking with me, holding my hand...and saying: “there is no human temptation or suffering that I have not experienced” I am also...

**That’s why arrogance has no place in Christian discipleship.** If even Jesus gladly undergoes a rite of repentance, how much more should Christians live humble, unpretentious lives of repentance! Indeed, following Jesus means setting out with him on this path of humility and solidarity, confession and grace, a way of love with which God is “well pleased.”

As many of us know the baptizer said; *“Wait a minute, shouldn’t this be the other way around?”* But that’s just it: Jesus has come to turn conventional religious ideas on their head. Jesus just

decides set aside all credentials and titles to stand with us in solidarity - so that in the end, our baptism is by Jesus; with Jesus and in Jesus where there is no place for “self-righteousness”.

That’s the way of Jesus and we all are invited to walk this path, a different path. And we can say **“Jesus, to me you have given yourself!”**

**Takeaways:**

1) **This is a perfect week to revisit the meaning of baptism, and for the baptized to remember their baptisms and their relationship to Jesus’ baptism.** Because we are part of the Body of Christ, we all are invited to make God’s words our own...it’s not just Jesus to whom God says, “You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased” - these words are also addressed to us! “God says to you, ‘You are my chosen, in whom my soul delights. You are my son/daughter, the beloved; with you I am well pleased’”

2) *Likewise, while it’s certainly true that the story of Jesus’ baptism recounts how he is singled out as God’s Beloved, the story also exemplifies the way of life to which the Beloved calls anyone who would seek to follow. This is not a life of presumption or arrogance, but rather of humility and solidarity. God in Jesus walks - and washes - with sinners! “Jesus also” is baptized - and so calls us to follow him on a path of unassuming generosity, never looking down our noses at anyone, and always gladly embracing the Spirit’s sanctifying, restoring, empowering renewal.*

**You are a beloved child of God, and Jesus also walks with you, with us on a path of eternity that starts right here and now.** So... remember your baptism and live your life with the joy and strength of God’s presence! Amen!

