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All Saints Parish
Syracuse, NY

Jesus' Baptism

My dear Brothers and Sisters, when Jesus was baptized by John the skies opened and a voice was heard: the voice of the Father speaking to his Son. In Matthew 3:17 we read: The skies opened and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Then in Mark 1:11 we read: "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." And in Luke 3:22: we hear the very same words. It is here that it is clearly stated: Jesus the son of Mary is also the Son of God. He is truly human and truly divine. This took place at the Jordan where Jesus was baptized at the very beginning of his public ministry.

Somewhat later, at the event of Transfiguration, again the heavens opened, and the same words were heard by Peter, James, and John. The same words, but with one difference. Something that is most significant has been added. In Matthew 17:5 we read: "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" We find the same words in Mark 9:7: "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" And in Luke 9:35: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

My dear Sisters and Brothers. In today's world there are too many things to see and hear. Whispers and loud noises everywhere, day and night, bombarding our senses and our minds. Let us stop and make all quiet, and listen to just one voice, the voice of our best friend, Jesus, the Son of God and the son of Mary, human and divine. Human so we may understand what God is telling us. But we are to listen to him. Jesus tells us in words and in example, how to live in God's consoling and loving presence in a way that is pleasing to God, by doing what is good and what is just. Following Jesus' teaching provides us with a sense of joy and wellbeing that nothing else can give. Jesus teaches us how to respond with good to all evil and so to stop all evil, and let us ourselves become the fountain of the goodness of God for ourselves and for all others. This is the way to become Gods beloved children, God's daughters and sons. The rules of this good life are simple. Jesus is teaching them to us by showing us how to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. My dear Sisters and Brothers, we should really listen to the words of Jesus, the words of the Son of God, and the son of Mary, and follow his example.

Today, this Sunday, when we remember the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan, the yearly cycle of the Christmas season comes to an end, and the time that we call Ordinary Time begins. This is the every day, ordinary, day by day kind of life. This is the time when all virtues are honed to perfection through dedication and patience. This is the time when in God's loving presence we can change ourselves and change the world for the better. A most important, and very real time and season. In this regard, I would like to share with you an act of magic. Listening to Jesus and following His example, let us respond to anything that is evil with something good. Instead of hitting back or carrying a hurt, let us respond to all such with a good word, a short prayer, an act of kindness. Like magic, this stops the evil at its very start, and it saves us like an impenetrable shield. We remain unharmed, unhurt in God's loving presence.

My dear Sisters and Brothers, I wish us all a most wonderful Ordinary Time.

Amen.