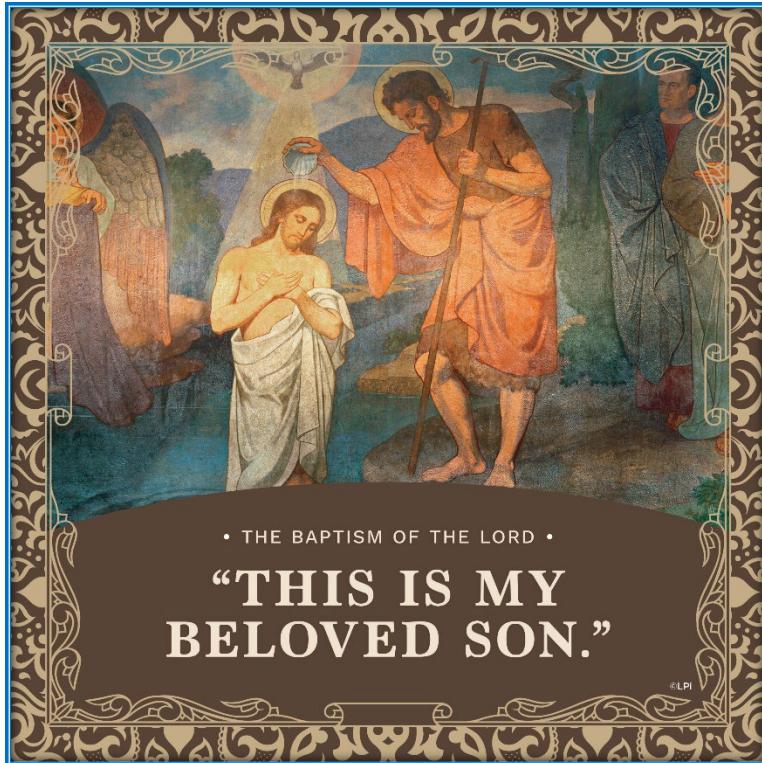


Dear Friends,

Last Sunday we celebrated the feast of Epiphany. Epiphany is a complex feast because there are three events in the life of Christ that make up his Epiphany. The visit of the Magi, the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist, and the wedding at Cana. The visit of the Magi is evidence that the child Jesus is not just the King of the Jews but rather he is the King of the Universe. God the Father is not only God of the

Israelites, but God of all peoples. The second event of our Lord's Epiphany, which we celebrate today, is the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan by St. John the Baptist. It is the beginning of his public ministry. God the Father's voice comes from the heavens saying, ***"This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased."*** God manifested himself in the man Jesus of Nazareth. The third event of the Epiphany is the miracle at the wedding of Cana. By performing this miracle, Jesus is manifesting his divine power and therefore appearing as God. As St. John wrote, Jesus... ***"revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him."***

With the Baptism of the Lord, Christmas Time ends and we start Ordinary Time in the Church. With His baptism, Jesus finished his hidden life and started his ministry. Almost from the beginning he had to face a lot of criticism and opposition. We know that nobody goes through life without facing criticism, opposition, misunderstanding, suspicion and even hatred. This is why there can be great pains inside family, church, and community. What does happen when our motives and integrity are questioned? Living with judgments takes away joy and even self-confidence. Experiencing hatred, bitterness, and being accused of hypocrisy are not an easy thing to cope with. As Jesus moved about doing his mission, he met every kind of reaction. Sometimes people loved him, other times



the same people shouted “Crucify him!” He was both loved and hated. There were people who accused him of being the egoist and blasphemer.

I have often wonder how Jesus coped with all this he had to face. He moved around Palestine preaching love and joy even as people called him a blasphemer and hated him. How did he stay joyful? How did he continue to be self-confident in his mission? How did he handle this? I think the answer is that he took his real identity from God and not from himself or from the opinion's others had of him. God the Father said, ***“This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.”*** (Mt. 3:17) ***“I do the will of my father.”*** - ***Jesus said.*** His identity, his courage and his joy were all rooted in something beyond the affirmations or criticisms of public opinion, beyond the judgment of those who hated him. Jesus' identity is from being the beloved Son of God the Father and doing His will. From the moment of *our* baptism, we are beloved sons and daughters of God and our mission is, as Jesus' was - to do the will of God the Father. If we keep this truth in mind, we will cope well with “talks” of people about us.

We need to keep in mind and accept it - there will be always criticism, anger, and sometimes even hatred if we are faithful to God. Jesus experienced this. And He told us ***“If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first.”*** (John 15:18) As baptized, we take our identity from God.

Peace,

Fr. Krzysztof Kardzis