

## THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD (1/10-11/2009)

*Isaiah 55/1-11, Isaiah 12/2-6, 1John 5/1-9, Mark 1/7-11*

In our search for God, we do well to keep Isaiah's words in mind: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.*"

When those words were first spoken, the prophet and the people around him had a rather limited view of the "heavens".

They had little sense, I think, of the actual immensity, almost infinity, of the universe.

We, on the other hand, are learning more and more about God's physical creation, and we marvel at its complexity and its extent.

So, when we read *Isaiah*, we should be even more impressed that, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so different are God's ways than our ways.

No matter how often we contemplate these prophetic words, we underestimate them every time.

God is different, utterly, indescribably different than ourselves.

That is why His coming in the person of Jesus into our midst is so astonishing.

On this feast, the last one of the Advent/Christmas season, it is all summed up in the appearance of the mature, ready Jesus.

He comes to the Jordan River to be introduced by his cousin, John the Baptizer, and to prophetically begin his ministry with the symbolic baptism at John's hands.

Then a voice is heard: "*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*"

It has begun.

Thirty years, more or less, have passed since the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

For those thirty years, we know nothing about what transpired in Jesus' life, except for his brief fling in Jerusalem as a twelve-year-old (*Luke 2/41-52*).

All we know is what *Luke* says after that isolated incident: "*He went down with his parents and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them...Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.*"

In my imagination, I always picture these years as totally formative.

At the same time as he was learning a trade to live by, I image him as a serious student of the Scriptures, and a very creative interpreter of those same Scriptures.

Thus, the Spirit was slowly molding this young man, who seemed little different than his fellow Israelites, into one who would be totally instrumental in God's coming into our world.

On one hand, there was a certain normality about Jesus' maturation and growth.

On the other hand, when we consider that he is the second Person of the Trinity taking flesh, and deeply involved in our lives, there is nothing normal about that, is there?

Indeed God's ways are different than ours.

I suspect, if we had our "druthers", we would have had the Lord do a complete and miraculous intervention if He was serious about saving us and converting the world.

Instead, he takes it slow and easy, as St. Peter says (2 Peter 3/8-9), "*With the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*"

So keep in mind: God's ways are different than ours; and we thank God for that!