

► Sunday, January 11, 2009, Baptism of the Lord

Is 55:1-11; Is 12:2-3, 4-6; I Jn 5:1-9; Mk 1:7-11

Week #21: Main Theme: Loving in marriage as God loves.

Isaiah tells us today that God's Word "shall not return to me void, but shall do My will, achieving the end for which I sent it." In our second reading and Gospel, we have the full revelation of Who God's Word is: it is not a thing but a Person. In fact, God is three Persons, and the Gospel today recounts the first time this truth was publicly revealed—at Jesus' baptism: the Father testifies of the Son, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove.

And what is the goal that the Son, the Word going forth from mouth of the Father, has to achieve before returning to the Father? The second reading tells us that He came to make us children of God also, in baptism. And we are faithful to this new birth from God the Father, when we act like the eternal Child of the Father, God the Son. That is, when we act according to true love, enabled by the Spirit and graces of Jesus Christ. Love is why God's "commandments are not burdensome"; they are not arbitrary rules—they are directions on how to love well. When the Church speaks about the moral law, she is passing on Jesus' commandments to love.

We are all called to love every person. What makes the love between husband and wife different from the love that we show all other people? It's a sexual love that builds a permanent partnership oriented toward the raising of children. What happens when sex is intentionally disconnected from children? It quickly becomes the mere pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure is a great thing—God created it, after all—but we all know that if we are *only* concerned with pleasure, then we act selfishly, and people get hurt. Jesus insists that sex is about much more than pleasure; it's about building a life together, a life that ideally will bring forth children that are the fruit of the sexual union of the spouses. We know from sociology that the family as Jesus presents it is the best for children, for husbands, and for wives. That is because it is the best structure for loving well when sex is involved. "In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments."

Bulletin quote: "Spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning, in both human and Christian terms. Their marriage can radiate a fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality, and of sacrifice."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1653-54