

This is My Son
Baptism of the Lord (A)
(Mt 3:13-17)

A few weeks ago, on the Feast of the Holy Family, the homily reflected on how the Fourth Commandment structured the family, ordering it in strength and harmony. It is part of the natural order for children to seek the approval of their parents, and when parents exercise their authority with love, in a God-like way, discipline of children is easier. Children wish to please their parents, and the blessing of parents (being in their grace) is a powerful incentive for good behavior.

At his baptism, this aspect of human nature is proclaimed of Jesus in relation to his true father, God the Father in heaven: “*A voice came from the heavens saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’*” God the Father expresses approval of his son, Jesus.

This passage is significant because of the unique kind of sonship Jesus has. Jesus is already “God’s Son” from all eternity; he is the second divine person of the Trinity, “eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God.” His relationship within the Trinity already makes him “Son” to the “Father.” But in the Incarnation, the Son becomes a son to the Father in a new way, as man. Man was created to be a “son of God”; God made Adam in His image and likeness. Michelangelo beautifully depicts this filial relationship of man to God in the central fresco of the Sistine chapel, where their two fingers meet.

But though God could say of Adam, “*This is my beloved son,*” He could not say of him, “*with whom I am well pleased.*” Adam disobeyed his Father, violated the fourth commandment, and lost the state of being in God’s grace. Now through Jesus, Adam will be reconciled to God. Jesus comes as a New Adam, through whom a new mankind will be restored to sonship of the Father. The sacrament of Baptism, which is the path to this sonship, is being established by Jesus through his baptism. Baptism is a washing away of sin, and a restoration of grace and blessing. Baptism formally makes us children of God.

In Jesus, God the Father can finally speak the words He wished to speak of Adam at his creation: “*This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.*” Through the Sacrament of Baptism – through our discipleship of Christ – the natural desire of our human nature to be pleasing to God is kindled and drawn forth. Man is reconciled. Through Christ, mankind is motivated and empowered to live in a way that meets with God’s approval.

Jesus shows us the way to live as a blessed son of God, pleasing to the Father. We must imitate him. Throughout this upcoming year, Sunday after

Sunday, we will learn from him in the Gospel. Each Sunday has a lesson to be applied to our lives. By living in the grace of our Baptism, following the example of the Lord, we too will be able to hear the beautiful words of the Father spoken of us: "*This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.*"