

“You are my beloved son. On you my favor rests.”

Today, our living God speaks these words of Dixon — “You are my beloved son.”

Our loving Father speaks them also to all gathered here this morning: those who have brought Dixon to this moment in his life, those who have been and continue to be instrumental in his discovering and welcoming God’s love in his heart and life; and those who bring him before the Church community to be welcomed through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

Dixon is already a beloved child of God – from the day of his birth ... precious and invested with great dignity by virtue of being formed, created, loved into life by God. He already has a heart and spirit inclined towards the living God, longing for God’s love and to belong to God and to become what God intends of Him.

*I know the plans I have in mind for you,
plans for your welfare and not for misfortune,
plans that will give you a future full of hope.
--You will pray to me and I will listen to you.*

Jeremiah 29:11.

As God’s words through Jeremiah suggest, God is, from moment to moment, laboring on our behalf, to nurture in each of us love, goodness, and holiness – and to prepare us for an ever greater outpouring of His Spirit into our hearts.

God desired, from the beginning to raise us to a dignity beyond our imagining, one in which we share in His very life, divinity.

Listen again to what St. Paul says to the Ephesians in our first reading this morning:

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

*and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine*

To be human now, is to grow into the very life of God. The gift of God, through the Word made flesh, becoming one like us in all things but sin, that we in turn might become like him in the transforming power of the Spirit of the Risen Lord, Jesus.

Baptism is the gift which raises us to this new and extraordinary dignity. Through baptism, God opens our humanity to the possibility of receiving the Spirit of Jesus in our lives... the Spirit that raised Jesus to new life and glory is the very same Spirit that opens each of our lives to a future full of possibility and hope.

It further opens the eyes of our inner self to see more clearly our true value and dignity, our authentic self — to see ourselves as God Himself does, to discover and embrace God's dream for us.

There is something for each of us in this celebration.

We are reminded of the source of our own true dignity.

We are to once again see ourselves as God does, as God gazes in delight upon us.

We are reminded that it is not our work that achieves, sustains this dignity — it is the hidden work of God— and our surrender to and cooperation with God's initiative.

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan does not only speak to the mystery of your Baptism, though, Dixon. It speaks equally to sacrament of Confirmation that you are about to receive.

Let us return for a moment to the Jordan river – and with our mind's eye, the eye of our imagination, see the Spirit descend upon Jesus – anointing Jesus within, consecrating him as the Christ for his mission of redemption. The Spirit – Advocate, gift of God, Fire, Peace, Spiritual anointing, Love – all pour into the heart of Christ – and through the gift of Confirmation, Dixon, into yours. Listen, then, to the Father say to Jesus, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” Hear

those words addressed to you, Dixon – “*You* are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased!”

Jesus’ baptism – his foundational religious experience – one that he returns to again and again – to further ground him in the Father’s love for him and in his love for the Father. It is being so deeply anchored in this love that empowers him to embrace the mission the Father has given him to reveal to the world the depth of God’s love – to be the very compassion of God in the midst of a broken and needy world.

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* (Luke 4: 18-19)

To bring the Good News to the poor, the marginalized, the thirsty, the hungry, the unemployed, the sick the prisoners, the immigrants and refugees, the widow, the orphaned children. As today’s Gospel in the Sunday Mass reminds us:

*to “love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and the first commandment.
However, he goes on to say that it is inextricably bound to the
second:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
The whole law and the prophets depend on these two
commandments.”*

The two cannot be separated. We can only love God if we love our neighbor – especially the most vulnerable and voiceless. We can only love God by being the compassion of Christ in our world today.

And so with the further outpouring of the Holy Spirit into your heart and inner being through the sacrament of Confirmation, Dixon, God bestows upon you a share in this work of Christ's kingdom. You are called to be a friend and partner with Christ, to be the compassion of Christ in the world, to labor with him in bringing about the healing and reconciliation that God intends for all people (especially the least of our brothers sisters who cry out in our midst) - and all creation. God's dream for the world! That all people will come to hear God calling out, "You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased."