

The Baptism of the Lord marks the moment at which Jesus begins His public ministry. Up to this time, Jesus is not publicly known. For 30 years He has lived a quiet, unknown life in Nazareth with his parents, working as a carpenter like his foster-father, St. Joseph.

But the time of His baptism in the Jordan by John marked the ripe time when He was called forth by God the Father to preach, to teach, to heal, to perform miracles, and ultimately to be led to His passion, death and resurrection. This is marked in dramatic fashion, as we heard, during the Baptism of the Lord. The heavens open, St. Luke tells us, the Holy Spirit is seen coming down from heaven, and the Father's voice is heard. St. Mark recounts it even more dramatically as he says that the heavens were "ripped open."

As we ponder the Lord being sent forth by the Father to begin His public ministry, this feast gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own vocations. Sometimes as we live our vocations we fall into the routine of it. This is normal and in fact routine can be an important element in staying faithful in our vocations. But we always have to make sure that routine doesn't lead to staleness, to a lack of zeal.

Day by day as we live our vocations we should always have the sense of mission, of being sent forth by God.

1. Married people, for example – mission to help their spouse grow in holiness; mission to educate their children and lead them to grow in holiness
2. Priest, for example – mission to offer himself in union with Jesus so that the people of God receive God's word; preach and receive the grace of the sacraments

Daily personal prayer is an indispensable part of keeping zeal for one's mission alive in one's heart and mind every day. The mission God gives us in our vocations are not easy ones and without God's daily sustenance we will fail in our missions, both in the little ways of daily faithfulness and in the big way of persevering in our vocation.

I guarantee you that for many priests who leave the priesthood the ultimate problem was that at some point they became lax in their commitment to daily, personal prayer.

We need also to ask the question: How many marriages ended in divorce because at the core there was no allowance for God's grace to come in because there was no personal prayer, no spousal prayer, no family prayer?

If one thinks that the burdens of one's vocation are too great, they must ask themselves if they have become overwhelmed in this way because they have not been praying. Jesus promises us "My yoke is easy and my burden light" but we allow Jesus to fulfill His promise in our vocations only when we sustain regular prayer.

I want to say a word to those of you who maybe have not found your vocation yet. Sometimes all this preaching about vocations can make you sad because you can't figure out what God is

calling you to or maybe you know you are called to marriage but haven't found the right person to marry.

God's ways are mysterious and God's plans are perfect – so be at peace. Pray, persevere, and do not lose hope that God will lead you to where He wants you. Jesus was 30 before He could begin His mission.

Given by Father Mark Gurtner at Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, 2013.