

Student Ambassador Program
Fellowship of Hope
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God's Affirmation through Baptism: Our Identity and Strength as The Beloved Children of God.

The ministry of John the Baptist was preparing for Jesus, the Messiah and the beginning of Jesus' ministry is marked by his baptism. *"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too."* The people lined up to be baptized as a symbol of their submissions to God and God's will. They lined up to repent - to confess their sin and believe that God forgives them and grants them a new life. They lined up for the transformation of life. But then why did Jesus the Messiah stand in line among all the people who were sinner? Jesus was the Messiah. He was perfect. He had no sin and yet he was baptized among the people of sinner.

Jesus' baptism might be the act of Jesus' solidarity to these sinners who came to repent and commit their live to God. Jesus was willing to get in line with them who are longing and hoping for transformation and who are also believing in new life and abundant love that God has offered for them. Yes, Jesus' baptism could also be the act of solidarity. But, he could pass this baptism and it would not change anything about his divine and human nature. He would still be God's only Son who was sent to this world to redeem us for all our sins. His death on the cross is the biggest solidarity, the biggest grace and love for the people of sinner. So, what did Jesus think about getting baptized? What did Jesus feel about being baptized just like other sinners? Was he also longing for transformation? What is all in this baptism that affect Jesus, personally, really? What did happen after this baptism that is meaningful and powerful for Jesus, himself?

While we are pondering to these questions about Jesus' baptism, let's remember about our own baptism. Do you remember the day when you got baptized? What was the reason and what was it like? What did you think before and after you got baptized? Do you remember about your feelings at all? Did you receive such a significant and powerful meaning and change? Pause in **SILENT**.

I grew up in a Catholic family and baptized as an infant. I was re-baptized as an adult when I was 19 years old in one of Mennonite churches in Indonesia. Being re-baptized was my first decision that I made for myself about my faith. I repented and agreed to leave my old life behind. I have decided to follow Jesus as my Savior and to commit my life for God and God's will. I was baptized on Saturday morning in a public pool with some others people from the congregation. Indonesia is a country with Muslim as a majority. So, to be baptized in the public space on Saturday means I was baptized among a big crowd of my Muslim brothers and sisters. It was quite intimidating yet

transformative for my faith journey. I was glad that both my parents as Catholics were very supportive even they were not quite sure at that time.

So, YES, baptism is a symbol of our submissions to God and God's will. We decide to say, "Yes God, I am a sinner and now I open myself and my heart to receive and to welcome your grace, forgiveness, and salvation. I also open my heart for your will and plan in my life." We say that we are ready to follow Jesus and to be his disciples. But, what is one thing that was very transformative after Jesus' baptism and was meaningful and significant for Jesus and also for us to remember, to keep, and to treasure? What is one thing that God has declared and affirmed through baptism that we often forget because sometimes our calling - our tasks - our 'to do list' for Jesus take so much from ourselves?

After Jesus was baptized among all these people, Jesus did not declare anything about his action. He said nothing but praying. He was praying - THEN - the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. The Spirit is loose from heaven to the world IN and THROUGH Jesus, not with water alone but with the Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus was anointed for his divine service in this world and ordained as Messiah.

Then, a voice came from heaven, "*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*" Jesus DID NOT ONLY receive the companion, power, and strength from the Holy Spirit but he also received the affirmation from God. God claimed him as the Son of God whom God loves dearly. God's affirmation was powerful, significant, and meaningful for Jesus - his life, his calling, and his ministry. God claimed and affirmed Jesus' identity in God and how much God loves him even before he started his ministry. This affirmation sustained Jesus through a time of temptations in the desert and through the joys and trials of his faithful ministry.

The gift of Holy Spirit and God's affirmation was powerful, meaningful, and life-giving to Jesus himself.

We, as a human being and a disciple of Jesus, also need to hear this affirmation from God and we need to hear it from each other. This affirmation is life-giving words that we as human being need to hear and remember over and over.

This affirmation has always been the strength in the journey of my faith and my calling. The year before I got baptized, I went through hard times. I went through depression. I thought that I was a complete failure and had no sense of purpose in life. I was longing for transformation. I was asking numbers of questions about my existence and purpose. What transformed me after my baptism was that I heard so many times that God loves me. I am the children of God and I am loved.

This affirmation brought me back to life not only in the day I was baptized but over and over - because I fail so MANY times to remember my identity, who truly I am and how much God loves me as the beloved children.

This affirmation is a reminder to each of us for who we are in God and how much God loves us for who we are. God loves us for who we are even before we were able to do something for God. God even knew and treasured us before we were formed in the womb of our mothers. We remember that before we even go to make disciples, God has called us “the beloved children.” Who we are in the sight of God matters as much as what we do as being disciples of Jesus.

We are those children who are listening and responding in the light of God’s grace. We are those who are created in God’s image and for God’s glory. We are those who belong, baptized by water and Spirit. We are the member of the kingdom, in the glow of God’s glory.

Through baptism; God grants us grace, salvation, and new life. God sends us the company and the gifts of power and strength through the Holy Spirit. God affirms our identity and how much God loves us as the beloved children of God. May we remember and treasure this as we continue the journey of our faith and calling. I will close by reading part of Isaiah 43 as each of us receive this life-giving words from God and as a reminder of God’s affirmation for all us to remind us of our identity and to give us strength for our journey.

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.”