

## **Bishop's August Message**

In my devotional reading today, Henri Nouwen took me back to the scene of Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan and the Voice from heaven that proclaimed: "You are my child, my Beloved; my favor rests on you." Nouwen wrote that whatever happened to Jesus – praise or blame – he clung to his blessing; he always remembered that he was the favored child of God.

I was reminded that Jesus came into our world to share his blessing with us. He came to open our ears to the Voice that always says to us: you are my beloved – on you my favor rests. The most important words a parent can bestow on a child, the most important words a child will ever hear from a parent, are words of blessing: "I love you. I'm proud of you. I believe in you".

In my mind I know that I am God's beloved. In my heart I sometimes wonder. In dark nights of the soul, I find myself stepping out from under the blessing or opening an umbrella over my head. God is surely blessing. But for some reason (often a known and glaring failure on my part) I count myself as unworthy of the blessing. Imagine! A Lutheran bishop who does not understand – cannot receive – grace. Then I pick up the pieces of my shattered little life and remember that the blessing on my head is at the discretion of the Bestower, not the receiver. No matter what, notwithstanding how I may feel at the moment, nevertheless I am indeed God's beloved child. And so are you. When we can hear that Voice, trust it, build our lives on that blessing, then we can find the strength to share it with others. May you be standing under your blessing.

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