

Baptismism of Our Lord – 2018

Picture this scene. A drunken bum has just finished off a bottle of cheap wine & he's stumbling along a river bank when he comes upon a baptism service taking place in the river...He manages to stagger into the water,...& the minister notices him & says, "My brother, are you ready to find Jesus?"....."Yah, preacher, sure."...And so the minister dunks him into the water & pulls him right back up, & asks him, "Brother, have you found Jesus?"..."Nooo, I haven't!"...The minister dunks him under again & pulls him up, "Brother, have you found Jesus?"..."Nooo, preacher, nooo." ..He dunks him under a 3rd time & holds him down a lot longer...before pulling him up..."Now, brother, have you found Jesus?" **...(Sputtering & spitting)** "Nooo, Reverend, ...are you sure He's down there?"...That drunk got baptized, but other than being soaking wet, it had no effect on him...He came out of the water no different than he was when he went in.....It wasn't the same for the Baptism Luke describes in our Gospel...The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by his cousin John was the defining event in His life,...the event that revealed Jesus' true identity as the Son of God, & marked the beginning of His mission to save God's people from their sins.

John the Baptist had been called by God to announce the coming of the Messiah – the Christ...He travelled along the Jordan River preaching to anyone who would listen: "Repent & be baptized for the Kingdom of God is upon us."...People from all around came to John to repent & have their sins washed away in the waters of Baptism. ...But, why did Jesus- the only person on the planet without sin - go to John to be baptized?...What sins did Jesus need washed away? ...Well, in Matthew's account of Jesus' Baptism., John asked Jesus that same question: "I need to be baptized by you...Why are you coming to me with all these sinners?".. Jesus told John that it had to be done that way, as part of God's plan to save the human race. ...John's Baptism was for sinners, liars, adulterers, thieves,...Yet, Jesus had willingly plunged into the same water as they did, as if to say, "I'm with them!"....He identified with every sinner He would eventually give up His life for...because He knew He would later take upon Himself all of humanity's sins as He suffered & died on the cross...

Our Gospel tells us that when Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit – a dove - came down & rested on Him,...& a voice from heaven proclaimed, "You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased." ...It's funny, I always imagine God in this scene being like a proud Papa saying, "Jesus, you such a gooda a boy. You maka mia so happy." ...You do know God is Italian, right?.....Anyway, everything that happened to Jesus that day at the Jordan Rivr launched Him on His mission to save the human race.

His Baptism provided the foundation & inspiration for everything He did for the rest of His life.. In the same way, your Baptism & mine should be the foundation & ainspiration for how we live our life... Like Jesus,.. at our Baptism we were anointed with the Holy Spirit – though none of us had a dove fly down & rest on us, & none of us heard God's voice... But I'll bet that as we came out of the water, God the Father was looking down at each of us...proudly proclaiming: "You are my beloved son (daughter)."

And just as Jesus' Baptism launched Him on His mission,...our Baptism launched us on our mission in the world...As baptized Christians, each of us are part of God's plan of salvation. ...It's not because we are anything special, but because God claimed us for His own at our Baptism, & gave us the graces & the Holy Spirit power to help us do our part in His plan for the world.

All baptized Christian's have the same mission...It's the same mission Jesus gave His disciples before He ascended into heaven: "Go into the whole world & announce the Good News to people everywhere."...That's our mission folks,...to bring the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, into the world...because there are people out there who've never had the Good News preached to them; **they need to hear it**...There are people who HAVE heard it, but have turned away from it; **they need to hear it again**...

There are people who are hurting; there are people who have lost hope, people who think G. has forgotten them. **They need to hear the Good News** that: *Jesus is always with us as He promised He would be...with us in the workings of the Holy Spirit, ever guiding us & reminding us of all that Jesus taught us...with us in His precious Body & Blood that strengthens us to face & to get through the trials & troubles that come into every life*...There are people so lost in their sins that they see no way God can ever forgive them; **they need 2 hear the Good News that:** *..Jesus loves them...& suffered & died for them so that their sins could be forgiven. ...They need to hear that Jesus will forgive them when they fall, & will be there to help them to get back up & start over*...This is the Good News all of us baptized are called to share.... You knew that right?...Not sure?

Ok, some of you are thinking, "Wait a minute, Deacon Ron, I can't do that...That's your job and Fr. George's job." ...Well, whenever anyone says that, I remind them of these words from St. Francis: "Preach the Good News always; if necessary, use words."...St. Francis was saying that it's not always necessary to preach using words. We can bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to others by LIVING the Good News ...We can tell others how Jesus can make a difference in their life by showing them how Jesus is making a difference in our life...People are watching what we do more than they are listening to what we say...They will know we are Christians by how we live the commandment Jesus gave us to love one another as He has loves us...This is how people watching us can have the Good News preached to them.

But, as followers of Jesus Christ, there are times when we should use words to help others come to know Him. ...I remember a day some years ago, when a 3½ yr old boy named Tyler showed me that sometimes words are needed to tell the whole story. ...It was during our Breakfast with Santa downstairs in the old church hall... Tyler took his little friend Becky by the hand & brought her upstairs into the church...As I followed behind them to keep an eye on them,...I could hear Tyler whisper to Becky as they entered the church, "We have to be very quiet; Jesus might be sleeping."...When they got to the baptismal font,...he showed her how to make the sign of the cross...& I remember thinking, "This is so cute."...Then, when Tyler took his friend to look at the statue of Mary, & told her, "This is Jesus' Mother,"...I began to think, "Something more is going on here."...

Tyler then quietly led Becky over to the crucifix,...& as the two of them stood gazing up at the suffering Jesus,...he whispered to her, "U know, Jesus died for us."...Then placing his hand on his chest, Tyler told his friend, "You can talk to Him in your heart."...It was all I could do to keep from falling down on my knees...as I recalled the words of Jesus, "*Let the children come to me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*"...Here was this 3 ½ yr old child so proud of his religion, his faith, his savior, that he just had to share it with his friend...He just had to tell her the Good News of Jesus Christ.

My Friends, all of us love to share good news in our life...We do it all the time. We can't wait to share good news with our family, our friends, our co-workers, people we run into at Wegmans or Target...What better news to share than the Good News of Jesus Christ alive & active in our life, & in the world? Whether by the witness of our lives or by the testimony of our words, or both, we are called to let Jesus work through us so that others will come to know Him.

Our Baptism probably took less than one hour in church,...but it began a faith journey that will take us through the rest of our life and hopefully on to heaven... Our mission – given to us at our Baptism - is to take as many people along with us as we can. AMEN!