

**Jesus is baptized by John**  
**First Sunday after Epiphany**  
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**Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus as a grown man, which seems a little strange since we were just celebrating His birth over the last two weeks. He was born as a beautiful baby boy for us all but today He is an adult, an adult who is coming to be baptized by John.

I don't know how long it has been for each of you since your Baptism but I know for me it was many years ago. I only remember the pictures I have seen in my mother's photo album from that day. I don't know what happened I can only look back and wish I could remember what it felt like to be marked as Christ's own forever.

As we reflect back let us look at what Luke tells us today and remember Christ's Baptism. Jesus was probably about 30 years old, and had not started His public ministry of preaching and healing. He had not yet called His disciples but today He went out to the wilderness and found John so He could be baptized.

John had been crying out in the wilderness and telling his followers to repent and be baptized; he never would have thought that he was going to be baptizing the one he was announcing. John felt he was not worthy enough to bend down and untie the straps on Christ's sandals and yet Jesus comes to him to be baptized like any ordinary sinner.

In our imagination we can see Jesus being baptized by John; we have heard the story and seen the pictures so often of Christ standing in the water. But why would He need to have his sins washed away?

Jesus comes here to be baptized for the same reason that a little over two weeks ago we celebrated His birth in a manger. The incarnation of Jesus in flesh was to bring humanity closer to God, and to do that Jesus leads us by participating in all aspects of humanity. There is no glossing over the fact that while being fully divine, Jesus is also fully human.<sup>1</sup>

Father James Martin, a Jesuit priest, visited the site where Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and talks about it in his book, *Jesus-A-Pilgrimage*, the book that Father Mark has been teaching in our Wednesday night Bible Study. Father Martin says that Jesus decided to enter even more deeply into the human condition when he was baptized. Though sinless, Jesus participates in the ritual that others are performing as well. He participates in this movement of repentance and conversion not because he needs it, but because it aligns him with those around him, with those anticipating the reign of God, with the community of believers. It's an act of solidarity, a human act from the Son of God who casts his lot with the people of the time. It has less to do with his original sin, which he does not carry, than identifying with those who carry that sin. The divine is fully immersing himself, literally in this case, in our humanity.<sup>2</sup>

As Jesus was lead to the Jordan River to be baptized by John, so we too are lead by God's will in our lives to make the choice to be baptized into the Christian family. We are all faced with the moment of choice as to what direction our lives will take. Our baptism, as Jesus' was, is an outward expression of the inner call of God on our lives; our way of saying "yes" to the salvation that is being offered. This act in our lives represents at once the end of a journey and the beginning of another, the sort of major crossroads of life.<sup>1</sup>

Today at our 10:30 service we are baptizing Bryce Matthew Nelson into our church family. He will begin a new journey in his life as he grows and will be nurtured by his family and his new church family. Over the last few years we have had babies, youth and adults baptized here at St Aidan's. There seems to be a new turn around in the church, people are returning and bringing their families back to church.

What does this mean for St Aidan's, how can we help the new families here find a home?

I would like to first look at the question that comes before our Baptismal Covenant during a Baptism service.

The Celebrant asks the congregation, "Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?" And we all say, "We will." Have we done that, maybe not so well?

Let us look at our Baptismal Covenant because in the next few minutes we will be renewing it and will be asked five questions that may help us support the newly baptized in their life in Christ.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

We answer each one of these with "I will with God's help." And we do need God's help to keep these vows that we have made.

The first talks to us about continuing in the apostle's teaching and the breaking of the bread and the second tells us that we should renounce evil, repent

and return to the Lord. But the other three questions are what I would like us to focus on right now and how they can help us with our new families.

Question three tells us to proclaim God's word and be an example of the Good News of God in Christ. The fourth asks us to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves and finally strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

It seems a little overwhelming when you take all three at a time but they are vows we have taken all our lives and we should be living them out every day, especially be living them out while we are here with our church family.

Jesus did not remain standing in the Jordan, and neither should we. The world changes and causes us constantly to evolve and adapt to new situations. We cannot stop our bodies from aging or our children from growing up. However, this forced change does not stop us from sometimes seeking to remain in a comfortable place longer than we need too. As well, in our faith we often remain caught up in a comfortable place or relationship with God because we do not want to take the chance of what the next step might bring.<sup>1</sup>

Let us take that next step!

First we need to pay attention to nurturing faith at every life stage. There is research that suggests the faith of young children and the youth are strengthened by the presence of genuine, faithful grown-ups journeying with them, practices that deepen faith across the life cycle are important. Second, they need journey partners who engage and model the lifelong work of meaning making and vocational discernment, who take seriously their partnership with God on behalf of neighbors. Finally, the church must create hospitable space for successive generations, recognizing that the body of Christ is a living social, spiritual, charismatic organism that is alive and growing.<sup>3</sup>

Today we are receiving Bryce into our church; let us remember our own vows to help him be nurtured in his faith as he grows. Let also reach out to others that they may see Christ in us as we help them start their own journey of faith.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord as we remember our Baptism today, help us to hear Your direction and guidance. Give us the courage to live out our Baptismal vows and move about in our church and the world so that we may be mistaken for you.

Amen

1. <http://www.dailycelebrations.com/beauty.htm>

2. <http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-A-Pilgrimage-James-Martin/dp/006202423X> Image: "The Baptism of Jesus," by He Qi: <http://www.heqigallery.com/index.html>)

3. <http://www.gradworks.umi.com>