

Baptism of Jesus Christ
Second Week of Epiphany

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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 an approachable baby for us all but today He is an adult, an adult with the fullness of Christian maturity 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 Mark 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 His sandals and yet Jesus comes to him to be baptized like any ordinary sinner.

I don't know how many of you noticed but in the verses of Gospel reading this morning Mark presents the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ, the son has come to be baptized; the Holy Spirit is present in the dove descending from Heaven and God's voice is heard from Heaven as he tells Jesus that He is his son, his Beloved and in Him he is well pleased.

Mark lets us hear God's voice. When Jesus comes up out of the water and everyone standing there hears a voice. God's own voice, heard so rarely since the earliest days of the Old Testament, affirms "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." God has just told everyone that Jesus is his son!

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.¹

Jesus was not baptized because he needed it, but because we need it. He wanted to show us that this is the first step, the beginning. This is how we join the fellowship of believers and join ourselves into the family of God.

As it was Jesus' obedience to the will of His father that lead Him 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.¹

Today we have 4 youth that are being baptized into the church family and beginning a new journey in their life. Over the last few years we have had more children and adults baptized then babies. 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?

Let us look at our Baptismal Covenant. In the next few minutes we will be renewing our Baptismal Covenant and we are asked five questions.

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.¹

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 youth is strengthened by the presence of genuine, faithful grown-ups journeying with them, practices that deepen faith across the life cycle are important. Second, youth 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.²

Today we are receiving 4 new members into our church; let us remember our own vows to help them be nurtured in their faith as they grow. 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.gradworks.umi.com>