

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jan 11th 2015

This great feast of the Baptism of the Lord closes the Christmas Season and points us to the Season of Ordinary Time. We have been renewed in the story of the Incarnation of our God, who is now forever with us as a human being. And, now we move forward into Mark's Gospel to grow in our desire and ability to be more with him and like him, for others.

The approach of Jesus for Baptism by John is a revelation of who Jesus is. This was the original feast of the Epiphany - the original manifestation or revelation of his coming, his mission. Eventually, the visitation by the magi, in Luke's Gospel, became the first manifestation of our Savior to the Gentiles. But, for us today, in the midst of the many things going on in our lives, this day can reveal to us who Jesus is for us.

Jesus does not need John's baptism of repentance for sin. Jesus chooses this baptism to be one with us. He becomes immersed in our reality. We know a similar meaning to the word "immersed" when we think of being immersed in a book or a project. We give ourselves completely to it. We almost can't think of anything else. At times, when we are completely immersed, it is as if there is no other reality. Jesus is immersed in the waters of the Jordan, muddied by our sins. By walking into that water, filled with all that was washed off of us, Jesus enacts his acceptance of his identity and mission.

But, I can witness his becoming one with me, in the Nativity and in this Baptism, and not let myself be touched by it. Even when I remember that I have been Baptized into Jesus, I don't always feel immersed in him. I am so pre-occupied with, so immersed in so many other things, other dramas.

Today can be a day on which we can ask for and receive the gift of a renewed co-immersion, a renewed communion with Jesus. And, today we can feel it. Jesus promised to make his home in us so that we can make our home in him.

Today, if we receive the Eucharist sacramentally - even spiritually - we can say "Amen" and mean so much. We can use these or similar words: "Lord, let my heart be open to your being immersed in me, with such complete love, and let me be more and more immersed in you, with growing gratitude." We might be able to feel what keeps me separate from the Lord and simply asked to be freed of the barrier, the excuse, the tension, the anger, the judgements, the habits which stand in the way of union and communion with Jesus.

Communion with Jesus and immersion into his mission can re-orient us. We can make our home in him, as he makes his home in us. It can free us and give us a renewed reason to live. It can solve so many difficult dilemmas - struggles I might have about how to behave, to act, to respond. Being with Jesus can really help my heart be more like Jesus' heart. I might have said that "I am not a patient person," or "I am rough with other people because I respond with a lot of anger." In communion and immersion into Jesus, I can feel the freedom that comes from the experience of his love and mercy for me. I can feel drawn into loving and being merciful the way he is. As the Preface of the Second Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation says,

"By your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies begin to speak to each other again, adversaries join hands, and peoples seek to meet together. By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is changed to mutual respect."

Because Jesus is immersed in us, and allows us to be immersed in him, our world can be transformed by the power of this communion. We will hear the cry of the poor, the sick, the sinner, as he does. We can become broken and given for others. We can immerse ourselves in the messy world we are called, by our sharing in his mission, to serve.

Amen, O Lord. Thank you for walking into the Jordan. Thank you for renewing my Baptism into you today.

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