

The Sunday Missive – January 10, 2020



baptism of Christ (mid 12th century) cappella palatina di palermo

The Baptism of Our Lord

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Nancy Castle, Janis Johnson, Diane and Roger Ludin, Thelma Huchthausen and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, January 3. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to your rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or: sssymington@gmail.com. **Let us pray:**

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the Peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Eternal God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and revealed him to us at his baptism in the River Jordan, grant that we, who have been born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who is alive with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 398 – I Sing the Almighty Power of God

I sing the almighty power of God, that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at his command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord, that filled the earth with food;
he formed the creatures with his Word, and then pronounced them good.

Lord, how thy wonders are displayed, where'er I turn my eye,
if I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky!

There's not a plant or flower below, but makes thy glories known,
and clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from thy throne;

while all that borrows life from thee is ever in thy care,
and everywhere that I could be, thou, God, art present there.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpBKpTEYdM0>

A Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah – Chapter 42 – Roger

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

Psalm 29 – Nancy

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings* Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord all glory* Worship the Lord in holy splendor.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters* The God of glory thunders.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars* The Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

Who makes Lebanon skip like a calf* And Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness* The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl* And strips the forest bare.

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood* The Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire* And in God's temple all say, "Glory!"

May the Lord give strength to his people* May the Lord bless his people with peace!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Flo1LNKnKlg>

A Reading from The Acts of The Apostles – Chapter 19 – Diane

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them.

LEVAS Hymn 143 – Wade in the Water Vss 3 & 4

Refrain:

Wade in the water, wade in the water, children,
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.

Look over yonder, what do I see? God's gonna trouble the water.
The Holy Ghost a-coming on me, God's gonna trouble the water. [Refrain]

If you don't believe I've been redeemed, God's gonna trouble the water.
Just follow me down to Jordan's stream, God's gonna trouble the water.
[Refrain]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_euSS86dvE

A Reading from The Gospel According to Mark – Chapter 1 -- Thelma

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Mark's story of Jesus' baptism provides the background for comprehending the entirety of his ministry and passion. The voice which singularly acknowledges Jesus makes it clear that through his words and actions, humanity is encountering the realized will of God. Although the passage does not employ the terminology of divine and human natures, the faithful have long understood it as the foundation of what we call the Incarnation.

The Spirit and its voice pour through this rent in time. In the event of Jesus' baptism, heaven and earth are visible to one another. Isaiah's prayer, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the

mountains would quake at your presence” is answered, and the promise of “a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” is fulfilled.

As Karl Barth put it, “God’s claiming of Jesus in this story summarizes the essence of the Gospel: the astonishing claim that God does not will to remain hidden in the heights of Heaven, but descends to the depths of earthly life in order to be seen and heard by us finite creatures.”

It is clear, even in Mark’s brief account, that the baptism of Jesus was, not only a revelation of the Son of God, an epiphany, but was also, by the time it was written, a statement of the Church’s understanding of itself: as disciples of Jesus, they were people of a new age. They had also come to equate baptism with the presence of the Holy Spirit. As people of the new age, they were given the same power through Jesus the Christ. For all the nuances of understanding the Holy Spirit, this gift was a foundational element of the Christian way. Moreover, the Church came to understand that baptism entailed a commission to serve. The whole Church thereby was called to ministry; the recollection of baptismal vows functioned as a unilateral ordination for followers of Jesus.

John was the messianic forerunner, but Jesus would truly usher in God’s new age, the earmark of which would be the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the early Church was distinguished from John’s baptism primarily in this respect: that it brought with it the gift of the Holy Spirit. But a prerequisite for acquiring the gift of mercy is confession and repentance – not theologically perhaps, but practically. It is our objective response to God’s subjective gift: to know thyself is necessary in order to repent, relate, and serve. A people who continually deny objective truth about themselves are as subject to destruction as a house of cards in a high wind.

Gerald May writes: “Consecration is defined as dedication to a divinity. It means ‘with the Sacred;’ and it implies intentionally participating with the divine. We can be dedicated to anything, a task, a cause, a nation, but we can only be consecrated to God. It means consciously participating in love; intentionally opening ourselves to accept the divinely given gift. It requires that we trust more in grace than in our personal capabilities. It calls for an attitude of willingness, a giving of ourselves to a power greater than our own.”

The inflowing of the Holy Spirit constitutes a vocation, a gift of grace and must be heard and regularly reaffirmed, in prayer, the sacraments, charity, everyday life, and in the fellowship of the faithful. We are always longing for affirmation that some new living transforming power has broken into human life. This hunger of ours, like the hunger in our bodies, must be appeased regularly. It would help us immeasurably if our every morning

began with this note to self: "I am not God. I am, just as are 8 billion others, just a human being, no more or less divine or deserving than any other. The only purpose I have is to let whatever goodness I encounter flow through me towards others less fortunate." Or words to that effect.

Jesus' authority and Jesus' humility are not a pair of contradictory things mysteriously held together. Jesus' authority is the authority of the humble one, and his humility is the true humility of the one who has all true authority. If we would live like Jesus, if we would be followers of The Way, we must pursue such humility the way the drowning look for a life preserver.

As for our national house of cards, we have steadily replaced any reliance on a greater authority and whatever value we placed on humble human interaction and accountability with manipulative marketing and messaging that have arrogant and sordid self-interest at their core. Agenda-driven misinformation pervades our society, and plain facts have been replaced by the fabrications of human ambition and greed as raw material for public discourse, activity and policy. Hooligans in the rotunda is a perfect allegory for our culture's pathology. As a people, we have far more technology than we have the character to manage with any semblance of integrity. God help us admit that today's ugly perpetrators are far more a symptom than a cause. New leadership is a start, and so is putting a dime in your piggy bank. We will know we are good among the nations of the world when we no longer talk about being great. Only God is great. And she is not at all happy with anyone who says otherwise.

When Jesus rises from the waters of baptism, there comes a voice: "You are my son, my beloved; with you I am well pleased." Does Jesus respond, "You're darn right you are, Dad!?" No. He heads straight into the wilderness, the same wilderness we all encounter every day, to humbly do the work he has been given to do: healing, feeding, peacemaking, forbearing. As the prophet says, "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

This same Spirit fills us in prayer and worship and then drives us from home and church every day, just as it drove Jesus into the wilderness. There, outside the comforting walls, we encounter the demons, pray for ministering angels, and walk on in the ways of joy.

Prayers

O Lord our Governor, the whole world is filled with your glory: We commend this nation to your merciful care, that we may follow your guidance and live in your peace. Give to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness; and make them always remember that they are called to serve humanity in the fear of your righteous judgment. **Amen.**

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move in every human heart, and among the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that being healed of our divisions we may live in justice, peace and charity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God, you proclaim your truth in every age by many voices: Direct, in our time, we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of this people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We pray for our world, in the midst of a terrifying pandemic, for those who are ill and their loved ones, especially Tony and Anna, Dorene, are there others?. We pray for those who care for the sick, and those who work in science and medicine. Bless their hands and hearts and let them know we are grateful. We pray for the people of St. Peter's by the Sea, the San Luis Obispo Deanery, and the Diocese of El Camino Real. May we know that our lives are always in your loving care. **Amen.**

Hymn 510 - Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove Vss

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love in these cold hearts of ours.

See how we trifle here below, fond of these earthly toys:
Our souls, how heavily they go, to reach eternal joys.

In vain we tune our formal songs, in vain we strive to rise:
Hosannas languish on our tongues, and our devotion dies.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening powers;
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love, and that shall kindle ours.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BJaCR3fq8Q>

May the Lord go before you with heavenly light, always and everywhere, that you may perceive with clear sight, act with pure intention and revere one another with true affection. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier remain with you and your loved ones this day and forevermore.