

St. Joseph Church

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The Baptism of the Lord 01/12/20

Monday NO MASS
 Tuesday 10:00 AM + KCs @ Good Sam
 5:30 PM @ St. Boniface
 Wednesday 8:15 AM + All Souls
 Thursday 11:15 AM @ St. Boniface
 Friday 8:15 AM + Mike Wenner
 Saturday 6:00 PM + Ray & Eleanor Slaymaker
 Sunday 10:30 AM + Frank & Rosemary Kilmurry



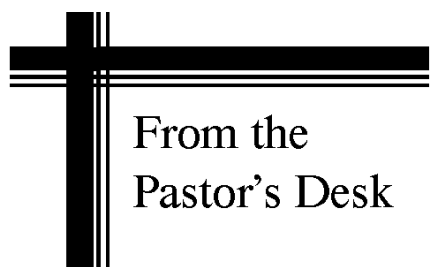
Mass



<i>Jan 18/19</i>	Saturday	Sunday
Atkinson, St Joseph	6:00pm	10:30am
St. Boniface, Stuart	No Mass	8:30am
St Patrick, O'Neill	5:00pm	9:00am
St Joseph, Amelia	No Mass	11:00am
Ss. Peter & Paul, Butte	No Mass	10:30am
St Mary, Spencer	5:30pm	No Mass
Assumption, Lynch	No Mass	8:30am

Sacrament of Reconciliation

for Ss. Joseph and Boniface:
 One half hour before each
 weekend Mass or by appointment



From the Pastor's Desk

Have you ever heard a story and then retold it to make it “better”? Maybe it was a question of timing, or introductions, or clarifying motivation. There are many ways stories are told and retold, and often they do get better in the retelling. This is what happens in this weekend’s gospel when we hear Matthew’s version of the baptism of Jesus by John [Matt 2:13-17]. The story Matthew had at hand was from Mark. There, John is said to have preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. One question naturally arises: why would (sinless) Jesus undergo baptism for the

forgiveness of sins? Also, Matthew has an entire infancy narrative with Joseph and Mary privy to his identity, something entirely absent from Mark’s version. In Mark’s gospel the heavenly voice says, “You are my beloved son” (addressed to Jesus). Not so in Matthew, where the heavenly voice says, “This is my beloved son.” In Matthew, the voice is not for Jesus’ sake but for the crowds. In these and in many other ways Matthew has improved the story—made it “better.”

The theological sophistication St. Matthew demonstrates is significant. He recognizes that John baptizing Jesus is a theological quandary. So, Matthew includes the exchange between these two. John protests and recognizes that he is the one who should be baptized by Jesus. Jesus does not match the apocalyptic vision John has been preaching. Instead, Jesus is mixing with sinners, those truly in need of baptism. In short, John objects to this state of affairs. But Jesus holds his ground and proposes that they proceed to fulfill “righteousness,” which means something like fulfilling what has been prophesied. The salvific intent of God has been foretold in the Scriptures. Each now is to play a designated part.

The command “Allow it now” by Jesus is followed by the straightforward “Then he allowed him.” This, too, echoes ancient Scripture whereby God would command, and it would be done. For example, in Genesis when God said to Abram, “Get up and go,” Abram “got up and went.” This is a classic “command-execution” formula. Ultimately, the gospel passage we read today is not so much about the baptism of Jesus as it is about the revelation of Jesus’ identity to John and the others. Even the passive voice phrase “After Jesus was baptized” is only one word in Greek. Matthew spends much more time on the revelation of Jesus’ identity, the spirit of God, and the voice from heaven. As with so many episodes in the gospel, we would do well to focus on the theological insights conveyed by the author.

Baptism is an ancient practice with some roots in the Essene community and in the ministry of John. Many of those ancient Jewish people who felt a need to repent of sin and experience forgiveness were baptized by John in the Jordan. How strange then that Jesus, too, went to John to be baptized. This has been a theological quandary ever since. Each evangelist handles the matter in a slightly different way, with the Gospel of John skipping the baptism altogether, so that John simply testifies to Jesus as the Lamb of God! Baptism will be the way new members, too, are grafted on to this people of God, in imitation of Jesus himself. At the conclusion of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus commands the Eleven to go to the nations (Gentiles) and make disciples by baptizing them.

We see baptism then as a dying to a former way of life and living now for God. Once baptized we are welcomed into the family of God, living a life in the spirit, the same spirit that animated the ministry of Jesus. On this feast of the baptism, let us recall the meaning of our own baptism and live lives worthy of that call.

Each year we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, an important moment in Jesus’ life and an important moment in Jesus’ life and a transition to his public ministry. How do you celebrate the anniversary of your own baptism.

Ad Multos Annos!

Fr. Bernard Starman

