

## January 12, 2020

### Baptism of the Lord

The reading today from the 42<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Isaiah contains a beautiful, poetic image of God's love for us: "I have grasp you by the hand." As I prayed over the readings this week that image stood out and brought back a memory from my childhood when I was only 4 years old. This memory is so vague that I am not sure if it was a dream I had or if it was something that really happened. It does not really matter because the emotional impact of Isaiah's words is the same. In any regard, as most of you know I grew up in a rural Whatcom County. Our family had a small farm of twenty acres. I was walking through a field with tall grass near our home and fell in a hole. Even though the hole was not deep, there was no way that I could get my four-year old body out by myself. My dad heard my cries for help. He came to me, reached down, and grasped me by the hand. You might say that he immersed himself into my need.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord and the word baptism means immersion. God grasped us by the hand and immersed himself into our humanity with the birth of Jesus. When John the Baptist baptizes Jesus, the heavenly Father reaches out to Jesus with his voice as he says, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Jesus is the way physical way, the sacramental way that we can know that the Father reaches out to grasp us by the hand so that we can know that we are his beloved children.

Truly, when humanity fell into Original Sin, we had no power to rescue ourselves. We were stuck in a deep hole and only the power of God could rescue us. We needed a human hand to grasp our hand to pull us out to save us both in body and soul. The saving power of God is present in Jesus, he and no other. His baptism was a birth for us; the Father showing us that Jesus indeed is his beloved Son who would give us new life. His beloved Son would immerse himself into his death for us on the cross and the Father would immerse the Spirit of love over him in death that he would rise again so that we too could rise with him. Jesus humbled himself in his birth, at his baptism and again on the cross. His baptism was for John to affirm his preaching and baptism. His baptism was for us to bless the waters of our baptism. He humbled himself by his death and finally shared in the Father's glory by his resurrection.

Today as we renew our baptismal vows, picture in your mind the Father grasping you by the hand to pull you up out of a hole. Hear him say to you as he said to his Son, "You are my beloved." Allow yourself to be immersed into the love of God in this Mass today. God indeed reaches his hand to us as we come forward to receive the very Body and Blood of the Lord.

The more we experience baptism as an immersion into God's love for us, the more we will be enabled to live our baptism, the more we will be able to immerse ourselves into the struggles of those in need. The more we will be able to reach out and grasp the hand of another person with the very love that we have received from Jesus. Our hand becomes the hand of Jesus. Our hand will have a power and strength and a depth of love that is greater than our own. We become the body of Christ, the Church.

The Church in Western Washington has two annual events where Catholics across the Archdiocese come together in Olympia to advocate publically for those who have no voice. The March for Life, which this year is Tuesday, January 21 and Catholic Advocacy Day, which will be on Thursday, February 20. At the March for Life we as a Church come together to say publically to people who feel alone and desperate because an unexpected pregnancy, there is another path than death. Let us help you. We ask that our Legislators to put policies and laws into place that will help people to choose life. On Catholic Advocacy Day, we speak up for the poor and vulnerable to convince our legislators to put policies and laws in place that create a more just society in our State. These are real ways for us to immerse ourselves, to reach out to those in need with a hand of love. I encourage you to do all you can to attend one or even both of these days. There will be sign-ups for the bus that will go to the March for Life after Mass today.

Remember in your prayer this week the image of God grasping you by the hand this week. Allow Jesus to use your hands as his hands of love in everything you do.