

HOMILY – THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD 1-10-2021

There are some very significant dates we remember in our journey through life: our birthday, our college graduation, our wedding anniversary, and our children's birthdays. But there is one special day I bet most of us have forgotten to celebrate. That special date is our baptism.

On that special day we were welcomed into three new families: the Christian family, the Catholic family and our parish family. Through our baptism and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit we became a child of God. Just as the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at the River Jordan and proclaimed **"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased"** – the same Spirit came upon us at baptism and identified us as His beloved daughter or son.

A well-known African American poet, Maya Angelou, was speaking to a group of college students and after spending some time learning their names, she said the following: **"Your name is a sign of your dignity. Calling someone by name is recognizing someone, not simply as human, but as a person. You bestow dignity on another person when you call them by name."**

How beautiful are the words found in the first reading from Isaiah. **"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit ... I have grasped you by the hand, I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness."**

These words from the prophet Isaiah remind us of our dignity as baptized Christians. We are called to be God's servants, his chosen ones and God has filled us with his Spirit. The words remind us that we are of great value in the eyes of our Creator. Through the waters of baptism, we have become daughters and sons of God in Christ. That is who we are. We are upheld, chosen and pleasing to the Lord. God has made us and saved us. God has made us God's own – **"Here is my servant, in whom I am well pleased."**

The struggle of our life is to claim that dignity and when we do, it will lead us to mission. When we can finally in trust say to ourselves, **"I am a beloved daughter or son of God,"** we can go forth and spread good news to the world. Jesus' baptism that we celebrate today does not only mark the moment where he claims his true identity and dignity, it is also the beginning of his public ministry. Like Jesus, when we claim our identity, we become empowered for mission! Dignity leads to service.

As your pastor and servant I feel it has been my obligation to remind you and myself who we are. We are God's beloved children. We need to claim that identity every day. We need to wake up each morning and pray: "My name is Bob and I am a beloved child of God. I am not worthless. I am precious. I am not without purpose. I am called. I am not forgotten. I am loved. God delights in the fact that I have another day to live." And once we do that, once we claim our identity, a question follows: **"Lord, what do you want me to do today?"** Identity and

mission – they go together. Let the words of the Prophet Isaiah ring in your ears and hearts: **“I, the Lord, have called you ... I have grasped you by the hand, I formed you and sent you to be a light for the nations.”**

For the past three and a half years that I have been able to serve you, I have been honored to share with you the mission of living out our Baptismal call and mission. You have challenged me, inspired me and encouraged me to be a better priest. I will be forever grateful that we have walked this journey together as brothers and sisters. What a wonderful journey it has been!!!