

## **Baptism of Christ A, 8 January 2017**

**Isaiah 42:1-9**

**Acts 10:34-43**

**Matthew 3:13-17**

So, today Jesus is baptized; a very short thirty years after the Feast of the Epiphany two days ago. Actually, in some way it is fitting, because it takes about two seconds for the Gospels to move from Jesus' epiphany to his baptism. We do not know much about those thirty years, other than that he grew up and increased in wisdom and in favour with God and the people, at least according to the Gospel of Luke.

However, let's talk about the baptism. What does it mean? What does it mean for us as Christians and for the world? I don't know why Jesus made his way to the Jordan to be baptized. How did he know that he needed to be baptised to fulfil all righteousness? I don't know. What is important to me is what God does right after John has baptized Jesus.

God sends down the Spirit, in the form of a dove, on Jesus and a voice says (according to The Message translation): This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."

What wonderful words: "Delight of my life!"

I truly hope that in some point in all of our lives someone has called us the delight of their life. It is a good feeling to be called that. And I know I didn't have to do anything special to be called that, I just needed to be; I just needed to be my parents' child.

So, in the same way, Jesus is the Son of God, and if we believe that we have become children of God through Jesus Christ, then, do we believe that we are also marked by God's love? That we are also his delight? I do believe that we are; like Roger quoted from Marilyn Robinson's Gilead last Sunday: God enjoys us! And in the same way that Jesus' baptism delighted God, he is delighted with our baptism, because we enter into a relationship with God through baptism.

We just have to be.

However, this being; this being enjoyed; this being a delight, in itself draws us into a different way of being. Right after his baptism, Jesus himself embarks on his earthly ministry, of course via forty days in the desert.

Now this is a caveat for us, the delightful, but that is a sermon for another day.

In the same way, if we are true to our baptism, we are called to an earthly ministry through Isaiah.

First we are drawn into a community through our baptism; we are drawn into the Body of Christ, and as such we are the gentle presence of God on this earth. We live in very noisy times with very little time and space for silence and reflection.

We also live in a time where it seems that the loudest and pushiest people always get their way and things are done by force. Just think about the number of wars we have fought, and are still being fought for the "sake of peace!"

There is seemingly very little patience and compassion left to make space for the "weak" of this world. Yet, the truth is, I believe, we are all weak, and I daresay the loudest are possibly the weakest.

So in this noise, there is little time and space for hearing God and each other; for listening to God and to each other; for contemplation of life.

Joan Chittister writes, "...contemplation is the fullness of awareness that comes from seeing what poverty and power and profit can do to bleach the spirit of life out of the people of God. Contemplation is not focusing on the God above, contemplation is focusing on the God within who calls and gifts and graces us all to be gift and grace to others. Contemplation is the searing presence of the Gospel in me."

So, by being a delight and being enjoyed by God, and by being a gentle presence, we are drawn to Isaiah's bruised reed, not breaking it, but holding it and nurturing it until it is healed and grows vigorously again. In the same way we do not quench the dimly burning wick, but we will cup our hands around it and protect it from the wind until it burns brightly again. Imagine how bright the world could be!

I don't know who the servant is that Isaiah refers to, but I like to think that it is all of us. All of us who are God's delight. As Isaiah writes in today's reading in verse 1, "...my chosen, in whom my soul delights."

As part of this Body of Christ, the community of the delightful, we have to help others to realize and understand that they too delight God. And as important, we have to keep on reminding each other of this. And we don't do this by adding to the noise in the world, but by "...not growing faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth..."

And if we believe all this business of being delightful and the joy which we give God, we will be "... 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.”

As Gregory of Nazianzus writes so beautifully: “Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of human beings, for whom his every word and every revelation exist. He wants you to become a living force for all humanity, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of him who is the light of heaven. You are to enjoy more and more the pure and dazzling light of the Trinity, as now you have received a ray of its splendour, proceeding from the one God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever.”

Please, go and be delighted, be delightful and enjoy!

**Amen**