

Baptism of Our Lord – Jan. 19/20, 2019

First Reading: Isaiah 40.1-5, 9-11

Second Reading: Titus 2.11-14; 3.4-7

Gospel: Luke 3.15-16, 21-22

So here we are – the end of the Church’s Christmas season – we have all celebrated the birth of Jesus and last weekend we celebrated the Epiphany – the three who followed the light of the star that led them to Jesus. This weekend it is all about the light of Baptism.

In preparing for this reflection I came across articles on how this was the beginning of the public life of Jesus and the significance of that, articles on how with his Baptism Jesus “knew” what his life would be like, how special he was to God, how he would suffer, etc. Wonderful elements to focus on – but – all the while I kept thinking about what it is like here at St. Joe’s - to witness and take part in the Baptism of the newest member of a family. Joy, light, celebration - that’s what I want to focus on today.

In Isaiah we hear: “...the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” The Psalm speaks of the light of God: “O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honour and majesty, wrapped in light – in light as with a garment...” Luke in the Gospel writes: “...when a voice came from heaven, “you are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Isaiah with the promise and then the fulfillment of the promise coming after John baptises Jesus.

Who among us would not love to hear that we are the Beloved of God? Nothing more – just that – it’s like a primal instinct and desire that we were born with. In his reflection on today’s Gospel John Foley states that “when the Father says “you are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased” – that

he is really saying “Receive my love that never runs away, never lets go, even in the desert, even on the cross.”¹

I think of the number of Baptisms that have been performed and celebrated in this parish – where each of our children have been Baptised and held up, welcomed as new members of our community – celebrated.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Marcus – the newest light in our parish family.

Most of us do not remember our Baptism – we were too young. But as we look back at our lives we might recognize how God has let us know of his immense love, how the light of our Baptism comes back to us over and over again throughout our lives.

At some point in our lives there are small moments of awareness – maybe not of light but of how God drenches us with love. We might hesitate to pursue that thought because it can be almost scary that much love. And then to think that the light of God might be shining from within us.

Perhaps if we listen very closely we might hear God speak our name telling us to share the light of his love with the world. I think this is what our Baptismal Call is all about.

Over the next few days I invite you to think about how you live out your Baptismal Call – how you are a light to the world.

Pope Francis pulls it all together for us: “The star appearing in the sky kindled in their minds and in their hearts a light that moved them to seek the great Light of Christ. Baptism illuminates us from within with the light of

¹ Staying With by John Foley, SJ – Spirituality of the Readings – St Louis University Sunday Web Site

Jesus. ... In virtue of this gift, the baptised are called to become “light” – the light of the faith they have received for their brothers, especially for those who are in darkness and do not perceive glimmers of light on the horizon of their life. ... You must take the grace of Baptism that is a gift, and become light for all!”²

Anne Osdieck in speaking of Pope Francis’s weekly General Audiences explained that our Baptism “is the point of departure of a journey of conversion that lasts our whole life.” Pope Francis’s “glimmers of light” signify the light of Christ that enlightens every person. Can you receive “the light of faith” for your brothers and sisters? Can you be a light for someone in the darkness?³

Do you hear that Marcus – You are about to shine with a very special light on all of us!

² Pope Francis: Take the Grace of Baptism and Become a Light for All – Nov. 13, 2013

³ Anne Osdieck Discussion Questions – The Baptism of the Lord St Louis University Sunday Web Site