

2070 years ago today, Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon River. The advance of these armies over the river north of Rome meant civil war. Civil strife, government crisis, wars, plagues mark every age and years of man. And women. 'Cross the Rubicon', still spoken today means 'passing a point of no return.' Rome ruled the world, Julius Caesar becomes dictator. His son Caesar Augustus is what Jesus and the early Church dealt with and he was responsible for many Christian deaths. Gets worse years later with Julius Caesar's great grandson, Nero, murders Sts. Peter and Paul, martyrs countless Christians. We cannot lose sight how our Lord in every year will use evil, evil times, even plague for His good, loving purpose for His people, for you.

A new year underway, how can it be worse than 2020! Well 2021 is off to a good start. Each new year we have this weird, irrational tendency to begin a new year with the assumption that things will truly be new, different, better. That calendar changes equates to humanity changes.

With a new year, it may be helpful to remember 3 painfully, honest truths -that we do well to see how this ties into why Jesus is baptized.

You, me made a whole lot of foolish decisions! As we get older, flip the calendar years we struggle to realize the best, healthiest life is one of honesty, humility, faith, love, forgiveness flowing from Christ The only real life, true life to life is centered on Christ. Yet knowing all this, you still told countless half-truths and lies. You committed adultery in your heart; slandered with your tongue. You didn't pass a single day, not even an hour, in complete service to God and neighbor. The good you wanted to do, you didn't. The evil you didn't want to do, you did. You're still the same sinner you were a year ago. Nothing has changed—certainly nothing on the inside, where it really counts.

What to do? Only one thing to do: throw yourself upon the mercy of Jesus, who delights in forgiving failures, rejoices to embrace foolish sinners, and stands in the waters of baptism to bring you daily regeneration, daily works, baptized into His death and resurrection. He stands in the waters to bring, connect your baptism to His baptism, His righteousness.

Consider You are still not enough. Throughout 2020, the religion of You!You!You! chanted seductively in your ear, "You Are Enough." And, at times, you bought into this self-help slogans. Oh, you're enough, alright. You're addicted enough to think you're better than other people who sin differently than you do. And you're enough of an individualist to think that, you are complete, even without others, even without God.

There's only one thing to do: throw yourself upon the mercy of Jesus, who eats with tax-collectors and sinners and people who think they're enough, who lovingly stomps out our self-sufficiency every chance He gets, who is always

more than enough for all of us. You can't do it. That is why He stands in the water that you are baptized, that He is your life, He names you, He is your only source to make it each day.

Consider You are weaker than you think. You have this tendency to assume that you are strong. That is dumb and you know it. It has gotten you into many terrible messes. You think, "I am strong enough to resist this temptation"—and, thirty minutes later—well. You think, "My commitment to God, to the straight and narrow is strong" but your heart tells a far different, darker story. You listen to the world and even your inner voice and get intoxicated enough on your "strength." You are weaker than you think. Daily you walk by dangers that could totally consume your life. He stands in the waters and is baptized to make you His, that baptized you now have a Father, you can now pray Our Father. Were it not for your Father's grace and his angels working overtime, you'd have long since been destroyed or destroyed yourself.

There's only one thing to do: throw yourself upon the mercy of Jesus. He prefers you know, come to the reality -you're weak—for then He is your strength. He will fill you with Himself, protects you from the forces of evil, delivers on His promise to be with you always. That mean always!

As you look back upon 2020 and we are all looking forward to a year back to normal, look forward to each day your God gives you to breathe, remember that life is not about you. It's about being His baptized child, it's about your entire identity flows from your baptism because one day. Jesus stood in those waters and you baptized, joining you to Him, your life has immeasurable worth then. You never say, 'I was baptized.' We don't talk like that. 'I am baptized. I am a child on God. A treasure worth more than any.' Life is all about Jesus the Christ and it's about your neighbor. Everything else is by and large vanity. Love your neighbor. Trust in Jesus. He will see you through. Live trusting your baptism.

For just as when Word, and Spirit got together in the beginning and launched the first day of creation with water of life, so Word and Spirit launched the first day of your new life, your new year, your new day, getting up each day anew as His baptized child. And one year will come, when your baptism, His work is complete, a perfect you in His new creation for eternity. That's why Jesus came. That's why He came to the Jordan. That's why He was baptized. And that's why He baptized you. His gift. The only life for you. As for Emmett today, as is for you, the promise God spoke in heaven at your baptism is still good and it always will be.