



Bringing Home the Word

The Baptism of the Lord (A)
January 12, 2020

Signal of a New Beginning

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In the sacrament of baptism, we stress that the person is no longer bound by original sin; rather, despite still retaining the wounds caused by original sin, he or she becomes free to live as a child of God, embracing the will of God through discipleship in Jesus Christ. We're free to live not as the world dictates but as those who know, love, and serve God in this world and look forward to being with him in the next.

Adults who go through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults have time to reflect on the conversion necessary for such transformation, but for many of us, the significance of our baptism as

infants gets lost in the long years between childhood and adulthood. We stop being mindful of the power of grace and the necessity of turning our lives over to God regardless of the work we do or the community we belong to.

We may have wondered why Jesus presented himself for baptism. Wasn't he God, born without sin? Of course, the answer is yes. But Jesus came to his baptism as a public witness of the need to turn over our lives to God. Like us in all things, Jesus approached John for the ritual washing that signaled a new beginning. It was a sign for us and a wonderful way to mark the beginning of his ministry.

Matthew records that he heard the voice of God saying, "This is my beloved Son." In baptism, God welcomes all of us as beloved children. Out of gratitude and praise, we, in turn, follow Jesus. And so we submit our lives to God—proclaiming justice, doing good, and loving God and others as we love ourselves. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
/ my chosen one with whom I am
pleased.

Acts 10:34–38

He went about doing good and
healing all those oppressed by the
devil, for God was with him.

Matthew 3:13–17

John tried to prevent him, saying,
"I need to be baptized by you,
and yet you are coming to me?"

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and adulthood.*

A Word from Pope Francis

In baptism, your life was already immersed in the mystery of the Trinity and you belong to Jesus. And if one day you should be taken by fear, or you think that evil is too great to be challenged, simply consider that Jesus lives within you.

—General audience,
September 20, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What is my baptismal anniversary date?
- How might I commemorate that anniversary of my rebirth in Christ?

Doubling Our Love

By Joyce Rupp

The parable of the talents is a call to look at what we have done—or have not done—with God’s gifts. Today “talent” refers to a natural ability or gift. The word has its roots in the Greek *talanton*, meaning a weighted amount of money of significant worth. A talent in Jesus’ time was a valuable coin. Invested wisely, its worth could greatly increase.

I can imagine Jesus looking at the people he taught and noticing the differences in age, physical features, and social conditions. He knew that beneath these externals there was a treasure of love in each. He longed for them to recognize and share their goodness. Then he thought of the talent, the precious coin, as a way to teach them.

In this parable three servants are each given talents “according to his ability.” They are expected to use them so the value will be multiplied. Two of the three do so and are praised for being “faithful servants.” Not so the fearful servant who did nothing with what he was given. He feared displeasing the master, getting hurt by doing the wrong thing, and doubted he could meet the challenge. In doing so his gift lay unused, so he was reprimanded severely.

Guaranteed to Grow

The greatest talent we all have is our capacity to give and receive love. This gift in all of us, like the parable’s coin, has immense value. Love has the potential of growing in worth when invested in

others. It has the ability of increasing in strength, depth, and quality.

Like the fearful servant, we can let this treasure of love lay idle. When we are in situations that challenge us to invest our love, we can hold back. Who wants to forgive someone who has done harm, do a kind deed if there will be no gratitude, or visit a lonely person when the day’s schedule is already full? At these times we would rather hoard our love, keeping it to ourselves.

One good deed can generate many more if we are willing to share our love. Kyle Sawyer, a ten-year-old boy, decided to raise money for a spinal disease affecting his sister. Kyle’s dedication and enthusiasm led him to find people who would help him make 2,000 paper cranes as a fundraiser. They were sold as decorations for a hospital lobby, and after much hard work fueled by love, his efforts brought in \$12,000. Amazing what a young boy can do with one talent!

Many times we invest our love by extending simple, genuine kindnesses to others. A local pastor asked parishioners to describe loving deeds others had done for them that had made a difference. The responses he received were not about grandiose gestures. They were about simple, loving actions, like visiting a

grieving widow, helping a senior citizen buy groceries, offering child care when a single parent was seeking work, listening to a confused teenager, and hugging someone who was crying.

Learning from Loss

Often the wounded share the fullest amount of love. Parents whose young children have died reach out to others with similar loss. Recovering alcoholics spend long hours supporting others struggling with sobriety. Disabled persons volunteer as receptionists for charitable organizations. We are never too old or young, too wounded or busy to significantly share ourselves with others.

Large or small, our deeds of love can make an immense difference. We might ask ourselves: How can I loosen my tight grip on the precious coin of my love? What keeps me from sharing this valuable God-given talent? How can my love grow and multiply? +



PRAYER

Lord, unblock the ears of my heart that I may hear your comforting voice of love, compassion, and peace.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 13–18

Monday, Weekday: 1 Sm 1:1–8 / Mk 1:14–20

Tuesday, Weekday: 1 Sm 1:9–20 / Mk 1:21–28

Wednesday, Weekday: 1 Sm 3:1–10, 19–20 / Mk 1:29–39

Thursday, Weekday: 1 Sm 4:1–11 / Mk 1:40–45

Friday, St. Anthony: 1 Sm 8:4–7, 10–22a / Mk 2:1–12

Saturday, Weekday: 1 Sm 9:1–4, 17–19; 10:1 / Mk 2:13–17