



Bringing Home the Word

The Baptism of the Lord
January 13, 2019

Telling Our Christian Stories

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When we were growing up, my siblings and I would often ask our grandmother to tell us stories about our mother when she was young. We liked listening to our mother tell those same stories from her perspective. The stories varied in some details, but it always felt like a veil was lifted on the past and we had some sense of where we came from along with some insight about our mother’s personality.

She, of course, did the same thing for my daughters, making them giggle at the story of my getting into her perfume bottle when I was three. Such

stories connect us with the people we know. Old friends trade stories of shared experiences; young companions learn about the world from the stories of their elders and even from the stories their friends tell them about their lives.

In Acts 10:36, Peter appeals to his listeners by telling the story they know so well. He even appeals to their shared experience as he says, “You know...” Stories connect us to one another and open the door to understanding each other a little more and a little better. In his story, Peter marks the baptism of Jesus as the beginning of his ministry. Our story in the Christian community begins with baptism as well. In verse 38, Peter records that Jesus went on “doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” What would the story of our lives after baptism tell people about us? Would someone like Peter tell people that we went about doing good and loving God and neighbor? +

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

You know...what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.

Luke 3:15–16, 21–22

John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming.”

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A Word from Pope Francis

Being holy is not a privilege for the few, as if someone had a large inheritance; in baptism we all have an inheritance to be able to become saints....Thus we are all called to walk on the path of holiness, and this path has a name and a face: the face of Jesus Christ.

—Angelus, November 1, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Can I proudly tell the story of my Christian life after baptism, or do I feel shame instead?
- If I can’t take pride in the story of my life, what can I do to change the narrative?

Just Why Am I Catholic?

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

What is it that makes one Catholic? I admit that I never really thought much about Catholic identity until I was asked to write about it. Why am I a Catholic?

The most honest answer? Because my mom and dad were. That's why I speak English, why I'm an American, why I like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—and why I'm Catholic. But while I can't change my parents or my mother tongue, there are things (like my religion) that I can change. So why do I stay Catholic?

I'm Catholic and stay Catholic because of the Incarnation. While Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe in the God of Abraham, Christians believe that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). And while all Christians believe in the Incarnation, for Catholics the Incarnation changes everything.

The Incarnation—God becoming one of us—gives Catholics a special insight into created things. We believe that creation is a window to God. I learn who God is through created things. This is the heart of what we believe about the sacraments.



The Things of Life

We believe that all creation is good. The Incarnation means that the very stuff of this earth has been taken up into the kingdom of God. “Things” are not a hindrance to prayer but are the very instruments of our salvation. We are not afraid to use things in

our worship: bread and wine, water and oil, candles and incense—even dust and ashes! We aren't afraid to drink alcohol at Mass (or at other times, for that matter).

The Incarnation means that God is not far away, shrouded in mystery. If Moses could say: “For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us?” (Deuteronomy 4:7), how much more we who believe in the Incarnation! We have a God who is very close to us, who experienced human pain, joy, work, and good friends.

Because I am a Catholic I am called to develop a spirit of wonder and awe in the presence of the ordinary things of life. Think of the grain of wheat falling into the ground and producing stalk and blade. As St. Augustine said, “Where can you find a greater miracle than that?” Catholics care for creation. Ecology, respect for all created things, saving the planet for our children—these are not peripheral to Catholic identity but at its very heart.

Ongoing Work

I have two parting thoughts. First: Although you might have been baptized Catholic as an infant, being Catholic is not something that happens all at once. We grow into it, and we have to work at it. It's like being married. You get married with the exchange of vows. But being married—growing into a married identity—happens over time. You have to work at it—or else, goodbye marriage! Similarly, we have to work at “being Catholic.”

Second: When I was ten, I decided to become a priest. I asked my pastor, a Franciscan, what I had to do. He directed me to the Franciscan seminary and I became a friar. I was a Franciscan before I even knew there were other kinds of priests: Redemptorist, Jesuit, Benedictine, and so on. Today, I wouldn't trade being a Franciscan for anything. And if I talk about how wonderful the Franciscans are, I don't mean to imply that there is something wrong if one is a Jesuit or a Redemptorist. And while I am proud of being a Catholic, I don't mean to judge others. One thing Catholics believe is that God loves variety. +



Lord, give me a shepherd's heart so that I can show your love and compassion to someone in need.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 14-19

Monday, Weekday:
Heb 1:1–6 / Mk 1:14–20
Tuesday, Weekday:
Heb 2:5–12 / Mk 1:21–28
Wednesday, Weekday:
Heb 2:14–18 / Mk 1:29–39

Thursday, St. Anthony:
Heb 3:7–14 / Mk 1:40–45
Friday, Weekday:
Heb 4:1–5, 11 / Mk 2:1–12
Saturday, Weekday:
Heb 4:12–16 / Mk 2:13–17