

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

By: Fr. Greg Ames

Thanks to the magazine subscription drives of my nephew and niece, I am receiving all kinds of magazines. I had once been reconnected with the Reader's Digest, which was a staple in my family home when growing up. It contains all the old columns and features, especially the little true stories readers send in: *While serving with the Salvation Army in the rescue effort at the demolished world Trade Center, I would tell rescue workers about celebrities who were visiting the site. "If you go over there," I told one city firefighter, "you can get Susan Sarandon's autograph." "Ma'am," the firefighter politely replied shaking his head, "when your job means climbing through rubble with 2000 other guys all night, every woman handing out water is Susan Sarandon." He then asked me for my autograph.*

In truth I see that God shows no partiality

The readings we hear each week desire to reconnect us, not to our youth, but to the beginning of our life of faith, our baptism. While some Christians wind up having great name recognition and some fame (we usually call them saints) baptism says that the life and work of every Christian, of each of us, is important. Wherever human need is found, we are all called to live as beloved sons and daughters. Christ doesn't need your autograph, but he wants your HEAD, your HEART, your HANDS.

YOUR HEAD We heard today the famous speech of Peter in Cornelius house. We usually hear it right after Easter, so that we scratch our heads and say, is that the same faithless, lying, cowardly Peter we met on Holy Thursday? Yes, it is Peter, and what he finally gets through his thick, hard and often stubborn head is that God has no favorites. Even when we seem unworthy, God loves us. Jesus wants to change the thinking in your head: to see you are beloved, even when the world thinks you are not very loveable.

YOUR HEART When Isaiah imagined God coming to save the people, he did not see an army, a king, a general, a multimillionaire. He saw a servant who

would suffer. He saw someone coming whose heart would be so on fire for justice and peace, that he would not count the cost. He would go all the way for love. Jesus is that servant whose heart was on fire, a light for anyone who was in darkness. He wants our heart to be on fire too. Not to change the world, but to change your daily world, a world where you are more just, your create peace, you open your heart to others.

YOUR HANDS I love that image Isaiah uses: God grasps the hand of the servant. In baptism, Jesus grasps your hand. And he wants to hold it and guide it, but sometimes things happen, we let go. We let someone else take our hand, other things fill our hands. This is the challenge of living our baptism. To let Jesus take your hand. And you can tell how firmly your hand is linked to the hand of Jesus, by thinking about your daily work. Do you write a letter to tell someone they are loved; does your grasp reassure someone who is discouraged; do you wipe the tears of those who have found life unfair?

In the course of almost 20 years, I figure I have baptized at least 500 babies with a few children and adults thrown in there. Do I remember each one? No. Are some very memorable? Yes. But each one is important. Each of you is important. And our baptism says you do not wait for someone else to ask you to do something; or for a priest or bishop to remind you. Our baptism says we can never say we have done our time. Served enough, forgiven just the right amount of times, completed our mission as Christians. Yes, there is always more that can be done and I could spend time talking about it. But today I want to celebrate how, from where I stand, I see you use your head, your heart, and your hands for Christ. I celebrate how you do not wait, you act. I honor how you rise above busy lives, and idiosyncrasies and even failures and live as a believer. I am blessed to be with you in the rubble, and to witness your faithfulness to Christ when you don't have the time, the patience or even the strength. I just could ask for your autograph, but it is enough to see you as God's beloved sons and daughters.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 42:1-7

Acts 10:34-38

Matthew 3:13-17

January 12, 2014

靈 修 生 活

邁 向 滿 全 之 路

在社會工作的日子裡，留給我最深的記憶不是自己曾擔當甚麼要職，或領受多少的薪金，而是第一次把家用交到母親的手上，這標誌著我真的長大成人，不再單是領受家人所給與的，而是開始學習關顧自己的家人，承擔一個成年人的使命。今天我們慶祝主受洗節，這節日標誌著耶穌長大成人，天主委派耶穌的使命也正式展開了。

依撒意亞先知書的內容被稱為上主僕人的詩歌，其中天主介紹祂所揀選的僕人，上主要在這僕人身上傾注祂的神，即這位僕人身上懷有上主不可思議能力，不過，最重要的是這僕人身上懷有一份超凡的使命，他不單要為上主而成為萬民之光，讓世人認識天主，而且天主正要藉着他與世人立約，立約即是對彼此的關係加以肯定，大家都在彼此的心中佔一席位，彼此不會隨意遺忘對方。因著這份使命，所以上主的僕人在教會傳統上被視為耶穌基督的預像。

宗徒大事錄的內容是來自伯多祿的講辭，伯多祿重申所宣講的那位就是被傅油的耶穌基督，傅油表達天主把能力加於某位身上，好讓他能完成天主給他的使命，有兩件聖事尤其表達這份恩寵，其中之一是堅振聖事，天主藉著洗禮給與我們新生命，並透過堅振聖事的傅油使我們能活出這新生命，即活出先知、君王、司祭三個身份，先知表示我們要以我們的生活為主作見證，君王表示我們要走在人群的最前端，引領其他人找天主，司祭表示我們不單要為自己祈禱，而且更要為世人的幸福而祈禱，在實際生活中關心他人的需要。

本星期福音所描述的是耶穌使命的序幕，聖父、聖神一起見證這重要的時刻，聖神以鴿子的形象出現於耶穌身上，鴿子在舊約中是生命的象徵，在洪水滅世的故事中，諾厄先以烏鴉查看洪水是否退落，可是沒有帶來好消息，其後，諾厄放鴿子觀察，鴿子最後啣著一根橄欖枝回來，諾厄因而知道洪水已結束，他與家人可再落地生根，在大地上延續下一代。由此，聖神以鴿子的形象出現，這暗示耶穌使命的目的就是讓我們分享天主的生命。天父以聲音表示祂的臨在，「這是我的愛子，我所喜悅的。」天主以特別的方式拉近我們與祂的關係，就是派遣自己的愛子來到世上，透過肖似祂的聖子，我們也成為祂的子女。

如果我們真是天主的子女，我想我們也應如同耶穌一樣，因著聖神的德能，而履行天主給予我們的使命。因著聖神不是指消極地生活，又或是無需為自己的生活籌劃，而是當面對生活不明朗的時候，我們願意對天主全然地開放，尤其在祈禱中更為醒寤，細心地觀察、等待聖神的指引，任由天主帶領我們完成祂所願意成就的事，所以其中所生活的是一份信德的表現。

禱文： 上主，祢恩賜我們領受聖事是獲得祢的恩寵，求祢也使我們忠誠地追隨祢唯一的聖子，成為祢名副其實的子女，因主耶穌基督之名，求祢俯聽我們的祈禱。亞孟。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 一 月 十 二 日

依 42:1-7; 宗 10:34-38; 瑪 3:13-17