



**The Baptism of the Lord (C)**  
**The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**  
**January 13, 2019**  
*The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector*

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Recently, I read, “Who inspires us makes us who we are.” That quote came from an ad for the Cancer Treatment Centers of America.

At an early age, one of my grandmothers had cancer and as far back as the 1940’s had a breast removed. It saved her life and gave her family many years as a devoted grandmother, avid church goer and volunteer and a terrific brown bread baker.

The ad said, “Who inspires us makes us who we are”.

Last Monday, I had the pleasure of visiting and taking the Eucharist to Mary and Earl Slenker. Now in their mid-eighties, they have lots of stories. They have been married for sixty-five years and have many friends as well as three children. They have been shaped by those years and their relationship, and they have shaped the lives of their three children as well.

This afternoon, Mother Sue and I will be heading to the Holland Home on 44<sup>th</sup> to help celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of a long-time parishioner. Lee Stodtman is a hundred years old and only fairly recently has become unable to be with us at St. Mark’s. Over one hundred years, his life has been shaped and informed by others. He inspires us with his devotion to God, his family and St. Mark’s.

The ad said, “Who inspires us makes us who we are.”

As a priest, I have been and continue to be inspired by individuals who give and give of themselves for God and God’s people in Parish life. As active and dynamic forces whether quietly or more demonstrably, they inspire others with their selfless commitment year after year. Just look around you. There are people across this Sanctuary who make St. Mark’s hum by giving of themselves in some thirty ministries. They inspire me with their commitment to God and God’s people.

Hopefully, we can all be inspired by today’s Gospel reading, the Baptism of Jesus by John. “The baptism of Jesus is considered a manifestation of God in Jesus, another ‘epiphany’. Today’s Gospel reveals to us Jesus’ relation to God as God’s Son. In the Gospel, all three members of the Trinity are manifested: God the Father in the voice, the Holy Spirit descending, and Jesus the Son.” The reading communicates important information to us “about the identity of Jesus.” (<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/baptism-of-the-lord-cycle-c-sunday-connection>)

As cousins, John and Jesus just may have been cut from very similar cloth, a cloth that could be said to contain the foundation of service to God and to others. As Christians, we are inspired by John, by Jesus and by a host of other holy women and men in the Scriptures and beyond the Scriptures. Next Sunday, part of our celebration will be to remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man of commitment to God and to social and racial justice. The list of holy women and men who have gone before us is long, and there are some sitting next to us. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are inspired by them and give thanks that their lives help to “make us who we are.”

In a recent poem and in very traditional language, the author of “A life well lived” said the following:

“A life well lived is a precious gift,  
Of hope and strength and grace,  
From someone who has made our world  
A brighter, better place...

A life well lived is a legacy,  
Of joy and pride and pleasure,  
A living, lasting memory  
Our grateful hearts will treasure.”

(Bhavna Patel, March 30, 2017, <https://plus.google.com/101219681155301899550/posts/cvg4rGRSwCv>)

Those who inspire us are a treasure, and they are people who embody trust. People who can be relied upon to be honest and straightforward, people who tell the truth and who are seen by others to be people of inspiration. I can only hope and pray that my life is a bit of that, especially as I relate to our children at St. Mark’s. They are precious and are the most vulnerable among us. They need role models in a world where role models seem more difficult to find.

Those “Who inspire us makes us who we are”.

I think we might all agree that we are a composite of the encounters of our lives, especially those women, men and children who are sources of life, goodness and strength for us in our journey of life. As we go through life, we accumulate those relationships and embrace them whether consciously or not consciously. Embracing John, Jesus and others as companions on the road of life can help to inspire us. They can inspire us to do good, to be truthful, to be people of integrity and to be people who are committed to others in life.

This is where Church comes in as an important element of who we are called to be as Christians. This is where reading the Scriptures and being inspired by individuals in the Bible can shape us as authentic followers of Jesus. This is why encountering four passages of the Scriptures every Sunday, receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus and rubbing shoulders with other ‘saints’ are important for us for the Christian journey of life.

Today, we will baptize yet another baby. We will welcome her into the Christian community through “water and the Spirit”. We will pour blessed water. The Sacrament of Initiation will take place with the powerful words, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. That act along with anointing the forehead with blessed chrism will seal Violet Elizabeth Zdarsky as Christ’s own forever.

Nothing can remove that seal. It is a powerful act, one that for us is celebrated in the midst of the community, as *we* welcome the newly baptized into the Body of Christ.

Parents and Godparents will make promises on Violet’s behalf to help her grow and mature in the midst of the Christian community. Words with serious connotations will be publically spoken, and we, too, will renew our own commitment as sons and daughters of the Living God in Jesus.

I believe that the words in the Sacrament of Baptism inspire us to do all we can to be people of integrity and truth, people of witness to the Gospel and people committed to the values of the Christian Tradition. Those values are embedded in the Scriptures, our Book of Common Prayer, our worship and in each one of us in this beloved community of faith.

Let us live life as John and Jesus lived. Let us live in such a way as to inspire others, so that they will know that we are Christians by our love of God, our love of Church and our love for one another. Amen.