

Sermon for 7.1.18

Today we celebrate the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist.

In the story of Jesus baptism, proclaimed in all four gospels, Jesus goes down into the water of the Jordan and as he comes up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove and a voice speaks from heaven: *You are my son.*

Now in the first reading today from Genesis, we hear another story about water, the spirit and God's words - and the early Christians made connections with that story.

At the very beginning of creation, Genesis tells us, there was watery chaos. And over that watery chaos there was the Holy Spirit hovering or a great wind blowing.

First there is chaos, and then there is the wind of Gods Spirit and out of the watery chaos comes the world. And God says *this is good.*

The water and the spirit and the voice are present at the creation and are also present at the baptism of Jesus, and we can see why the early Christians began to associate the event of Jesus baptism with the image of creation in Genesis.

I'd like now to say a little about the book of Genesis.

As we know Genesis is the first book in the bible and it is concerned with origins of the world, of human beings, of Israel and its ancestors.

Now according to the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, the reason for the focus on the importance of origins was that in the ancient world, the time of the origin of an event or a reality, was accepted and understood as a privileged moment.

It is a gifted moment in time that speaks more clearly than ever, about the reality of God's plan that is to unfold.

The belief is that the original intention of Gods plan, is clearer then in that privileged moment, than any other time. We might say in today's language, that this privileged moment equates to the moment when the lights come on in the darkness of the heart and mind together, before they fade somewhat perhaps through familiarity or doubt.

If we take the idea of the gifted moment into consideration when we read the four gospels, we may deduce that the gospel writers were of the same mind as their ancestors who put together Genesis, for we see that all four gospels begin with the origin of the reality of Jesus Christ.

Matthew for instance, begins with an account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. In Luke, origin is the focus in the story of the birth of Jesus, while in Mark and John the first words in both gospels are "In the beginning" with the origin of Jesus public ministry in his baptism flowing on.

We could say therefore that the fullness of the beginnings of the gospels provide us with a wonderful privileged moment.

A gifted moment that speaks more clearly than any other time about the reality of God's plan that is to unfold through Jesus Christ.

In terms of Jesus baptism in today's reading, it is of interest to note that the Eastern Orthodox church seems to have captured this privileged moment in their icons which portray Jesus up to his neck in the water, while below, sitting under the waves, are the river gods of the old world, representing the chaos that is being overcome.

And in Matthew's gospel, before Jesus baptism, Jesus is asked by John "Why do you come to me" and Jesus response is in effect a statement that says "To take on the chaos and bring order –to fulfil all righteousness".

So what does this mean for us? What does the privileged moment hold for us at the origin of our becoming members of the community of faith in our baptism?

Well at the time of our baptism, we are being attended to personally by God, and our goodness and righteousness is provided with a profound accompaniment to guide its growth out of chaos and into such love for God and such confidence in him that we can rightly be called God's sons and daughters.

In our baptism we are being enabled to become, through our transformation, what it is to be truly human in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

The Lord be with you.