

Baptism of Jesus

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan”

Each year this Sunday has two emphases; one, that it is the first Sunday after the Epiphany, the day we commemorate the coming of the Wise Men to do homage to Jesus; the second emphasis is the commemoration of the Baptism of our Lord. The connection between these two emphases, in part, is the notion of inclusiveness and reaching out. The wise Men came to worship Jesus and his family welcomed them, including them as part of the worshipping community surrounding Jesus. But this coming of the Wise Men is also symbolic of God reaching out beyond the Hebrew tradition, reaching out to Gentiles, to the foreigners that they might be touched by God’s Son. Jesus’ baptism is a sign, among other things, of his willingness to be included in humanity; it was an act, on His part, of Divine humility, of saying “my life will be a part of your lives.” But it may also be an act of preparation, preparing Him to reach out and embrace all the children of God whose lives he will touch and change and heal.

The purpose of the Epiphany season is to show us the value of reaching out to others that they might become included into our fellowship, the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The season reminds us that God reaches out to all people who are estranged and calls each of us to the ministry of reaching out and inclusion. I firmly believe that part of my ministry and part of your ministry that we share is that we say to folks “Come, you do not have to believe as I do, but come, receive the benefits of being a part of this family of God. Come to this place where the sacraments are offered and where the Word of God is taught and heard and hopefully preached appropriately. Come to this place where others will learn about you; where your joys and sorrows and needs and aspirations will be heard and shared and become part of the fabric of this people of God. Come to this place, where by the grace of God, lives are changed and people grow spiritually.” What we have in this place, within this parish family, is not ours to hold onto but a life to be lived and shared with others. Bishop Sidney

Sanders, former Bishop of the Diocese of East Carolina, said a long time ago that all of us, all of us, are the beneficiaries of those who went before us. We learned how to love, we learned how to care, we learned how to receive from others. We learned our faith from others, from our parents and grandparents, from our Sunday School teachers, from our godparents and from our priests. Nothing we have and nothing we are came neatly packaged into our lives. Somebody touched us, somebody reached out, somebody included us. That is the ministry that has been given us. To be people who reach out and people who include others in our lives that God's mercy, love, joy and fellowship may be spread throughout God's creation.

Amen