



From A Bishop's Journal (651)

The Baptismal Call (2)

On the occasion of Pentecost 2006 I published a pastoral letter on the marvel of our baptism. Part One of the letter I recalled the “great missions” that were given in our diocese in 1992 and 1993, as a desire for a new evangelisation and follow-up to the 1987-1990 Diocesan Synod.

“Called by the Father”

We are God the Father's beloved. In looking at us, the Father sees His Son Jesus. He sees us as His beloved daughters and sons. This is a great mystery of faith, a mystery of love, a mystery of deep unity. Not a single human being is rejected: all our brothers and sisters on earth are invited to live this profound unity that exists between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “God the Father having granted you the honour of entering into a covenant with Him by baptism as one of His children and as a member of His Son, He is obliged to look upon you with the same eyes, love you with the same heart and lavish upon you the same love He bestows on the beloved Son... Since then, His fatherly eyes have been constantly upon you... His heart, constantly engaged in loving you, His power, wisdom and goodness have ceaselessly been at work protecting and guiding you, and dispensing infinite blessings, corporal as well as spiritual, upon you... What love, what kindness, what praise and thanksgiving must you render Him for so many favours! May all of the Lord's mercies towards the children of man and all the wonders He works for them praise and glorify Him!” Beloved brothers and sisters in God, since the Father loves us so, let us acknowledge this marvel, let us go, like the baptised Jesus, and bear this good news to the people here and away, let us bring this Good News to the whole world.

“United to Jesus”

We are so united to Jesus through baptism that we can say with Saint Paul: “I no longer live: it is Christ who lives in me.” Jesus must be alive in us, and we must live in him only, our lives must be a continuation and an expression of the life of Jesus. We are sisters and brothers of Jesus, people of his race, his blood, even of his family tree. Our history is mixed up in that of Jesus, and his history is mixed up in ours. Since God the Son took flesh in Jesus, everything has taken on a new meaning. Since God entered into a covenant with humankind, we have become intimately united to Him. A Christian is a member of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, we are one with him in body, we are

incorporated to him, we form a single body with him. What we have become is unbelievable. Saint John Eudes writes: “When he welcomed you into his covenant as one of his members, the Son of God pledged himself to look upon you, love and treat you as a part of himself, bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh, spirit of his spirit, as a person who is one with him. He pledged to give you his eternal Father as your own father... He pledged to give you his most holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to be your Mother. He pledged to give you his church to also be your Mother. He pledged to give you his flesh and his blood in the holy Eucharist as nourishment for your soul... He pledged to give you his own name and endow you with the most excellent qualities he received from his Father. For he is indeed the Son of God, *They will be called children of God and that is what they are* (1 John 3:1)”.

“Energised by the Spirit”

At our baptism, we were called by the Father to enter into a new and eternal covenant. We are henceforth united to Jesus forever. We are incorporated to Christ, we are one with him. The Spirit of God also immersed our hearts, we are animated by the Spirit because he was abundantly given to us. “Unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God,” Jesus said to Nicodemus. “What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” During that meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus recalled the marvels of the new covenant: “God has so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that all who believe in him live and have eternal life.” The Holy Spirit was given to us, writes Saint John Eudes, to be spirit of our spirit, heart of our hearts, and soul of our souls, and to be always with us and in us, not only as in his temple but as a part of his own body, that is, as a part of the body of Jesus Christ, which is his own and which must be energised by him... After Our Lord ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came into the world to form and establish the Body of Christ which is his Church, and to give it the fruit of his life, his blood, his passion and his death. The Holy Spirit comes into our baptism to form Jesus Christ in us, to incorporate, give us birth and make us live in him, to animate us, inspire us, and direct and guide us in all we think, say, do and suffer as a Christian and for God.”

“Sent into the World”

On the day of the inauguration of his ministry as successor of Peter, the late Pope John Paul II sent an invitation to the whole world, an invitation repeated later by Pope Benedict XVI: “Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and to accept his power. Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ, to his saving power, open the borders of States, economic and political systems, the vast areas of culture, civilisation, and development. Do not be afraid! Christ knows what there is in man, and he alone knows. Today, man ignores too often what he carries in him, in the depths of his spirit and his heart. He is so often uncertain of the meaning of his life on earth, he is overwhelmed by doubting that leads to despair. I beg and implore you humbly and trustingly, to allow Christ to speak to man. He alone has the words of everlasting life.” Called by the Father, united to Jesus, energised by the Spirit, we are sent into the world to open paths to Christ, to prepare a path for the Lord, to level the way of the Lord. A song of Michel Scouarnec called “God among Men” draws the major elements of every baptised person’s mission in the midst of the world: “To talk about your Father’s love, who will use your voice? To follow the path of the poor, who will have your heart? To be light to the world, who will have your eyes? To be the joy of your brothers, who

will have your hands? To be starved for justice, who will want your hunger? To overcome the weight of hatred, who will want your cross? To be salt of the earth, who will take your body? To live your life today, who will live of you?"

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