

Sermon Message  
The Baptism of our Lord  
January 14, 2008

Trinity Church  
Matthew 3: 13-17  
The Rev. Deacon Ann Revel

Good morning, you all. It seems like I have been here before, but somehow it feels different. Be as it may, we have a different purpose today. We are here to celebrate the Baptism of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Soon after Jesus was born King Herod heard about this little new born king. In order for Jesus to not receive the kingdom that was due him, Herod had some of his henchmen travel all over the area with strict orders to kill every boy child under the age of two.

However, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and told Joseph and Mary to quickly flee to Egypt for safety. They went and they stayed for some time hidden in the basement of what is now a church there. Today, one may go to that church but one cannot go down in the lower parts of the building where the Holy Family lived in a grotto while living in Egypt.

When the huge Answar dam was recently built, the builders did not think the church would receive any damage, but they were wrong. The force of the water from the dam gradually seeped into the basement area, thus making it impossible to see where the family hid. While their best engineers are still working on the project, some water still manages to inundate the area. So, today, the church really stands in the backed up waters of the Nile.

While Jesus was in Egypt, Herod died. Then an angel of the Lord approached Joseph saying, "Get up"! "Take the child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel for the one who would kill the child is dead". Since Judea was still not very safe the angel gave instructions for the Holy Family to go to Galilee. They found a safe haven in Nazareth and it was there they built their home and lived. By doing so, things the early prophets had said came true. "He will be called a Nazarene."

We don't know much about Jesus during his growing years other than " He grew in stature and wisdom." Jesus studied under his father, Joseph, and he became a carpenter as well.

About that time John the Baptist came into Galilee and started preaching. He kept shouting to others " The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent!!!!" He kept saying "Someone is shouting in the desert!! Prepare a road for the Lord. Make a straight path for him."

John must have been one of the first "beatniks" or flower child" for he had long hair, his clothing was made of camel hair and he wore a large leather belt around his waist. He ate honey and locusts for his food. But John still went about yelling ... "Repent...Repent you of your sins" Hundreds heard him and were baptized in the river Jordan.

For, Israel, the Jordan River is a rather long river as it runs from north and the Sea of Galilee to South to the Dead Sea. When Jesus arrived there, John immediately insisted that Jesus baptize him. Jesus would have no part in that. Jesus told John "I NEED to be

baptized by you. It will be proper for YOU to baptize me in order to fulfill things that the prophets said a long time ago." Finally, John agreed to baptize Jesus. As was the custom, John submerged Jesus in the water, saying "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Then a very, very strange thing happened. It seemed as though the heavens opened up and Jesus saw the son of God, descending like a dove. The dove probably landed upon the shoulder of Jesus. When that happened, a voice from the heaven said "This is my son with whom I am well pleased".

Last Sunday, little Jaiden Charles and Merick Daniel Trotter were baptized. They were officially baptized into the household of God. They were also anointed with oil. The Oil of Chrism gives a sacramental expression in a tangible way to the invisible anointing of the Holy Spirit which all baptized Christians possess.

When the children were baptized they became in union with Christ in his death; and his resurrection and, His birth into God's family, the church. They were also forgiving of any sins they; may have committed and they began a new life in the Holy Spirit.

While the children may receive, at some time a type of a spiritual awakening to the gift of the Holy Spirit, it is not necessary for them to become "saved" as it is used by some, for this was already done on their baptismal day. Jesus' reason for being baptized was NOT for repentance, but for fulfillment-making complete. As it were his birth, his naming and his presentation. It was more than that. It was start of Jesus' ministry. At the moment of baptism he experienced an overwhelming awareness of just who he was. He KNEW that he was chosen. He foresaw his future. When Jesus came out of that water he KNEW. He heard the voice of his heavenly fatherly saying, "You are my beloved son, my precious child, in which I take great delight." Yes, Jesus knew that which was to come.

At our baptism, it is not as though we declare ourselves for God or accepting him, as much as it means God is acting for us, taking us in his arms, making us a member of his family, grafting us into the body of Christ. We too, became a child of God.

As I witnessed the baptism of those little boys last week, I was strongly reminded of the baptism some 17 years ago, of my grand-daughter, Aimee Lin in this church. Some of you may remember - it was just a little bit different.

At that time, my daughter, Linda, was not known as being one who was well organized. She seemed to have a terrible time getting her act together. However, a date was set for the baptism of Aimee. When I was in Israel I had purchased a bottle of purified and blessed water that was supposedly from the river Jordan. At least, they were selling it at a place where it had been decided was the place where John baptized Jesus. I wanted some of that water also to be used on Aimee as it had been on the other grandchildren before her.

Since, by virtue of my ordination, I may perform all the church sacraments except two, the consecration of the bread and wine and the absolution of sins, I was all set for Aimee's big day. Now I want all of you to imagine that it is your child who is being baptized. Well, to start with, Linda and her brood were late. The church service started but they were nowhere to be seen. Finally, here they came. Linda was carrying a

squirming Aimee, clad only *in her diaper*. The *baptismal gown* was *clutched* in Linda's hand. The whole family clomp, clomp, clomped down the tiled center aisle to the place where I usually sit now.

The other siblings were in a race to see who could get to the pew first. Linda kept trying to get the heirloom baptismal gown on Aimee, but she had grown too much for the gown to fit her decently. Linda kept trying to get the gown on Aimee who started to cry as only Aimee could cry and scream. In the meantime, one of the others had to be taken to the bathroom. Clomp, clomp, clomp all the way out and all the way back in.

Finally, the heirloom dress was on Aimee but she was such a husky baby it was too small to be fastened and the little matching bonnet would do no more than hit the top of her head.

Eventually, it was time for them to approach the baptismal font. They all arrived there but not before all the prayer books and all the hymnals were stumbled over and finally dropped to the floor. The adjustable kneelers were stumbled over and they too, dropped to the floor. Giggles could be heard throughout the entire congregation.

At last, it was MY big moment; My Turn to say "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit". If things had been bad before, they suddenly became much worse. I was to use the water from the font for the first two pourings--- The Father and The Son --and was to use the water from the bottle for the third--or final--Holy Spirit. Things went well until it was time for me to sprinkle the Jordan River water on her head. I shook the bottle. Nothing happened. I shook it again--harder.

Still no water! Finally, in desperation, I gave that little bottle the shake to end all shakes and managed to hit poor Aimee on the head with the bottle. Naturally, she howled a howl as only her lungs could produce. And, so did the entire congregation.

I finally remembered that I had to remove a tiny little plastic plug from the bottle before it could release. This time it worked. At long last, Aimee was held in the arms of Jesus to be his child forever.

Yes, in our baptism we received God's Holy Spirit. There is but one Lord, One faith, and One baptism for, when each of us was baptized we received the fullness of his Holy Spirit for all time.

If we refuse --or fail -- to take our part in the fullness of the church, I am sure that God is very disappointed and sad at our negligence and will have to try to fulfill His will without us.

The church, at its best, OR at its worse, is the best thing we have to show our love for Jesus Christ and all he stands for. It does more good, than all its critics combined to make this world the kind of place God would have it be. It is the instrument that God has given us to save the world. It is up to us to see that He does prevail!!!!!!

Wonder of wonders, He did His part. He made us a part of himself on the day we were baptized. The question is--Are we doing OUR part in the proclamation of the Good News of our savior??? Are we fulfilling our mission in life?? **Amen**