

Reflections on Faith and Life for January 10, 2021

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, a life-changing and *world*-changing event. I'm betting not many of you remember your own baptism. But I clearly remember mine.

It was March 30, 1961 (no, I didn't mark that date at all when it happened, but I sought it out while I was in seminary). My mother made me go to church, but she let me choose which congregation I wanted to join. I opted for San Marino Presbyterian Church, where most of my friends went, because they had a really good children's choir. Before I could join, I had to attend "Confirmation classes." There were six of us in the group that year. We met six Saturday mornings to "learn" about what it meant to be a Presbyterian Christian. Our last homework assignment was to write a prayer. I was a teenager and had NO idea what prayer was all about. So I wrote something that had lots of "thee's" and "thou's" in it, because God surely would appreciate something that sounded so "holy"!

The big day arrived; but much to my horror, I had to be publicly *baptized* before I could be confirmed—can you imagine a 14-year-old introverted girl standing up front alone with a huge congregation watching? I knew nothing about baptism. But I had one serious concern: there were two ministers there (Presbyterians call them *ministers*, not *pastors*). One was old and "smelled funny," and I didn't want him to baptize me; I was hoping it would be the other, younger man. – How much did that sacrament mean to me? I don't even remember which minister did the unimpressive deed!

Fast forward 35 years. I was in my second year of seminary and just learning about the sacraments (you know, baptism and communion). And I was appalled to learn that when I was baptized, the Holy Spirit had taken up residence in my heart and had been with me ever since. My discomfort was because I had gone, with the Holy Spirit, into situations and places that Jesus would never have ventured, unless he went there to heal or otherwise minister. I had lived for 35 years blissfully unaware that God had entered into me to change my life, to lift me up, to "mark me with the cross of Christ forever."

I regret those lost years. It's no one's fault that I didn't "get it"; I guess I just wasn't ready for God at that time. But how much different might my life have been if I'd had even an inkling of what baptismal faith was all about.

I share this today to commend to *you* the importance of your baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. May you "walk wet" all the days of your life!