

BAPTISM OF THE LORD - JANUARY 11, 2015

"ONE MIGHTIER THAN I IS COMING AFTER ME. I AM NOT WORTHY TO STOOP AND LOOSEN THE THONGS OF HIS SANDALS. I HAVE BAPTIZED YOU WITH WATER; HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT"

I READ A QUOTE RECENTLY - LET'S SEE IF YOU AGREE WITH IT:

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT DAYS OF YOUR LIFE ARE.....

THE DAY YOU WERE BORN AND THE DAY YOU FOUND OUT WHY...

AS A CHRISTIAN WE MIGHT ALSO SAY:

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT DAYS OF YOUR LIFE ARE:

THE DAY YOU WERE BAPTIZED AND THE DAY YOU FOUND OUT WHY...

HOW MANY OF YOU WERE BAPTIZED AS ADULTS?

LET'S SAY AGE 16 OR OLDER....

MOST OF US WERE BAPTIZED WHEN WE WERE INFANTS....

SO WE DON'T EVEN REMEMBER IT.....

WHICH DOESN'T MAKE IT UNIMPORTANT.....

LIKE OUR UNREMEMBERED BIRTH - VERY IMPORTANT

ALSO, JUST BECAUSE WE WERE BAPTIZED IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY

MEAN THAT WE FOUND OUT WHY - ESP. BEING BAPTIZED AS AN INFANT....

THAT CAN TAKE A WHILE.....AND NO DOUBT THE PROCESS VARIES FOR

EACH OF US...FINDING OUT WHY WE WERE BAPTIZED...

PERHAPS JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVIDES SOME CLUES THAT CAN HELP US

IN THAT PROCESS WHEN HE SAYS:

**"ONE MIGHTIER THAN I IS COMING AFTER ME.....
I HAVE BAPTIZED YOU WITH WATER; HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE
HOLY SPIRIT....."**

IN ANOTHER GOSPEL, JOHN THE BAPTIST SAYS:

"HE MUST INCREASE; I MUST DECREASE"

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU....BUT I KNOW WHEN I WAS GROWING UP I FOR THE MOST PART I THOUGHT I WAS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE..

I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL ABOUT ME....

I THINK WE ARE ALL PLACED ON A THRONE WHEN WE ARE BORN....

AND THAT'S FINE.....

THAT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR US AND OUR EARLY YEARS.....

OUR DEVELOPMENT OF A SENSE OF SELF...

A CERTAIN CONFIDENCE AND SELF-WORTH....

BUT, IF WE ARE TO MATURE AND GROW, EVENTUALLY WE HAVE TO

LEARN HOW TO GET DOWN OFF THAT THRONE GRACEFULLY

(HOPEFULLY)....

OF COURSE, FOR ME IT WAS PROBABLY INTENSIFIED BECAUSE I WAS

THE ONLY BOY - WITH TWO OLDER SISTERS - UNTIL THE AGE OF 14 AND

THEN ANOTHER SISTER....

AND ALSO, I WAS A WHITE MALE GROWING UP IN OHIO IN THE 1940'S AND

1950'S WITH THE GREATEST GENERATION POURING OUT ALL THEIR

ENERGY TO MAKE MY GENERATION THE MOST EDUCATED AND

PROSPEROUS EVER.....AND PROBABLY THE MOST PAMPERED - AT LEAST

UP TO THAT TIME

SO, IS IT ANY WONDER THAT I (AND OTHERS) MIGHT GROW UP THINKING

I AM THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE AND IT'S ALL ABOUT ME...

ESP. IN OUR USA CULTURE....

IT IS ENCOURAGED IN SO MANY SUBTLE AND NOT SO SUBTLE WAYS.....

I AM THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE AND IT IS ALL ABOUT ME....

***PERHAPS THAT IS ONE REASON WHY BAPTISM IS SO IMPORTANT - EVEN
AT A YOUNG AGE....***

***THEN AT BAPTISM - EARLY ON- WE GET THE MESSAGE - IT'S NOT ABOUT
YOU - YOU ARE NOT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE -***

***IT'S ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND YOU ARE PART OF THIS COMMUNITY
OF BELIEVERS***

***AND WE BELIEVE THE DIVINE SPIRIT IS THE CENTER OF THE
UNIVERSE....***

AND YOU HAVE NOW BEEN BAPTIZED INTO THIS DIVINE SPIRIT.....

***YOUR JOURNEY OF DYING TO YOUR FALSE SELF, AS THE CENTER OF
THE UNIVERSE HAS BEGUN AS WELL AS YOUR JOURNEY OF***

***RISING AND SHARING IN THE DIVINE SPIRIT IN A SPECIAL WAY HAS
ALSO BEGUN - THE RISING OF YOUR TRUE SELF***

BUT IT IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY....

***SOME HERE MAY HAVE SEEN THE MOVIE....."UNBROKEN" OVER THE
HOLIDAYS...***

***IT DIDN'T COME OUT AS WELL IN THE MOVIE AS IN THE BOOK, BUT LOUIE
ZAMPERINI HAD AN OLDER BROTHER WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN HIS
LIFE, ESPECIALLY HIS EARLY LIFE WHEN LOUIE GOT OFF TO A RATHER
DIFFICULT START....***

LOUIE WAS A RATHER REBELLIOUS CHILD, ALWAYS IN TROUBLE UNTIL HIS OLDER BROTHER TOOK HIM UNDER HIS WINGS AND SAW HIS POTENTIAL AS A GREAT LONG DISTANCE RUNNER AND WORKED WITH HIM, BRINGING HIM ALONG - EVENTUALLY LEADING TO PARTICIPATION IN THE 1936 OLYMPICS....AN OLYMPIC RUNNER - FINISHED 2ND OR 3RD HELPING HIS YOUNGER BROTHER GROW AND MATURE....

HE WAS AN OLDER BROTHER WHO COULD SAY OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHER: HE MUST INCREASE, I MUST DECREASE....

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO THAT JOURNEY IN OUR LIVES.....

HELPING SOMEONE ELSE INCREASE WHILE WE DECREASE....

OUR FALSE SELF DECREASE.....

E.G. CERTAINLY THAT IS WHAT TRUE LOVE IS ALL ABOUT..

OUR FALSE SELF DECREASING AND THE OTHER INCREASING

E.G. IF YOU PLAY TEAM SPORTS YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT - AND

SOME OF THE GREAT ATHLETES ARE MODELS OF THAT, E.G. LEBRON

JAMES.....I.E. THE TEAM MUST INCREASE, I MUST DECREASE....

E.G. UD BASKET BALL TEAM RECENTLY

E.G. PARENTS KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT.....AND THE STRUGGLE INVOLVED

IN THAT - LETTING THE CHILD TAKE CENTER STAGE....

PERHAPS HAVE THE CHILD PLAY THE HARP UP HERE....

E.G. A GOOD TEACHER KNOWS ALL ABOUT THAT...

E.G. A GOOD HEALTH CARE WORKER - IT'S NOT ABOUT ME - BUT THE

PATIENT

E.G. A GOOD ADMINSTRATOR, A GOOD LEADER KNOWS ALL ABOUT THAT MY FALSE SELF MUST DECREASE, THE OTHER MUST INCREASE, THE COMMUNITY MUST INCREASE, AND THEN AS A RESULT MY TRUE SELF WILL INCREASE, THE DIVINE SPIRIT WILL INCREASE WITHIN US AND AMONG US...

THAT IS ONE REASON WE ASK YOU TO CONTRIBUTE YOUR TIME, YOUR TALENT, YOUR TREASURE TO OUR COMMUNITY...

AND WHEN YOU DO, YOU REALIZE THE BENEFITS, THE GROWTH OF YOUR TRUE SELF, YOUR GROWTH IN THE DIVINE SPIRIT BOTH WITHIN YOU AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY...

LET US PRAY IN THIS EUCHARIST FOR THE RENEWAL OF OUR BAPTISMAL PROMISES.....IN EFFECT, "I MUST DECREASE, YOU MUST INCREASE"

THEN, PARADOXICALLY, OUR TRUE SELF WILL EMERGE

WE WILL GROW IN FREEDOM, WE WILL GROW IN TRUST AND IN PEACE

WE WILL TAKE OUR TRUE AND RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE....

OUR FALSE SELF WILL DIE AND OUR TRUE SELF WILL RISE....