

BAPTISM OF THE LORD, JANUARY 10, 2016

IT IS ALMOST 30 YEARS AGO NOW.....

I DID MY DISSERTATION FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN PSYCHOLOGY

***I WAS STUDYING THE DREAMS OF WOMEN DURING THEIR FIRST
PREGNANCY.....***

***ONE THING I WAS LOOKING FOR – BESIDES A DEGREE - WAS BIG DREAMS,
IF YOU WILL.....***

***THE NOTION BEING THAT DURING MAJOR TRANSITIONS IN OUR LIFE
(LIKE A FIRST PREGNANCY) A WOMAN IS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A "BIG
DREAM"UNFORGETTABLE DREAMS.....AN ARCHETYPAL DREAM
SOURCES OF WISDOM FOR THE TRANSITION SHE IS UNDERGOING.....
AND SEVERAL BIG DREAMS DID SHOW UP.....***

***I REMEMBER ONE DREAM - IT MAY NOT NECESSARILY HAVE BEEN A BIG
DREAM – STRICTLY SPEAKING – BUT IT WAS UNFORGETTABLE –
AT LEAST FOR ME.....I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE DREAMER....***

IT WENT LIKE THIS....RATHER BRIEF AND SIMPLE....

***THE WOMAN WAS IN A BIG TUB.....A SMALL POOL LIKE
SHE WAS GIVING BIRTH TO THE CHILD.....***

***THERE WAS A MID-WIFE, A NURSE NEXT TO HER HELPING WITH THE
DELIVERY.....***

AND SHE GAVE BIRTH RIGHT THERE IN THE POOL, THE WATER.....

A GIRL, I RECALL....

THE MOTHER TOOK THE BABY AND HELD HER IN HER ARMS BRIEFLY....

THE NURSE TOLD HER SHE HAD TO LET GO OF THE BABY AND DROP HER INTO THE POOL OF WATER.....

THE MOTHER WAS VERY RELUCTANT, VERY HESITANT....

EVENTUALLY, SHE AGREED.....

SHE LET GO OF THE BABY

LET HER GO DOWN INTO THE WATER.....

AND EVENTUALLY AFTER A FEW MOMENTS THE BABY EMERGED.....

LOOKED AT THE MOTHER AND SMILED BEAUTIFULLY....

WHAT A GREAT DREAM.....

AND I RECALL READING AT THE TIME OR HEARING THERE WAS SUCH AN EXPERIMENT IN RUSSIA WITH NEWBORN BABIES.....

AND INDEED.....

IF YOU LET GO OF AN INFANT AND ALLOW IT TO BE SUBMERGED/DROWN IN THE WATER IT WILL RISE TO THE TOP AND FLOAT NATURALLY.....

IT WOULD TAKE A LOT....

FOR A NEW MOTHER TO LET GO AND TRUST THOUGH WOULDN'T IT?

AND THAT'S WHAT I THINK THE MESSAGE OF DREAM WAS FOR THE DREAMER....THE PREGANANT DREAMER

IN HER THIRD TRIMESTER, AS I RECALL.....

A DREAM TELLING HER, PREPARING HER FOR THE BIRTH PROCESS, PREPARING HER TO TRUST, TO LET GO....

IN TERMS OF TODAY'S LITURGY, THE DREAM IS ENCOURAGING THE MOTHER TO ALLOW THE CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED – IF YOU WILL

ALLOW THE CHILD, LET THE CHILD GO DOWN INTO THE WATER, INTO LIFE, IF YOU WILL, AND TRUST THAT SHE WILL EMERGE IN A NEW AND WONDERFUL MANNER SEPARATE FROM MOTHER....

"YOU ARE MY SON""YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER"- VERY POWERFUL DREAM. POWERFUL BECAUSE IT IS ALSO SCARY AND MESSY.....RAW TOO, BASIC VERY HUMAN AND NATURAL....

AND TO ACTUALLY BAPTIZE IN THE WAY IT ORIGINALLY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DONE.... IS RATHER SCARY AND MESSY, ISN'T IT – KIND OF RAW ALSO????

SO MUCH SO.....WE DON'T EVEN DO IT MUCH ANYMORE...

WE'VE REFINED IT....TAMED IT, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY....

WE'VE BROUGHT IT INDOORS - FIRST OF ALL

WE'VE TAKEN IT OUT OF ITS ORIGINAL CONTEXT - OUTDOORS, OUT IN NATURE, IN A RIVER - INITIALLY, THE RIVER JORDAN

WE DON'T GO DOWN TO THE GREAT MIAMI RIVER AND HAVE THE INDIVIDUAL GO DOWN INTO THE RIVER, SCANTILY DRESSED, IF AT ALL, AND BE COMPLETELY IMMERSSED IN THE WATER – BEFORE EMERGING IT WOULD BE TOO RAW AND MESSY -- TOO NATURAL, I SUPPOSE

TOO MUCH LIKE A DEATH AND A BURIAL, IF YOU WILL

AND WE ARE MORE CIVILIZED, I SUPPOSE.....

BUT IT IS ANOTHER WAY AS WE TALKED ABOUT IN THE OPENING CONFERENCE ON CREATION -

HOW WE HAVE SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM CREATION AND ALL THAT

IT HAS TO OFFER US

E.G. IT'S LIKE DIVING INTO COLD WATER ISN'T IT????

THAT'S LIKE DYING - TAKES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF COURAGE AND

FAITH – LETTING GO - YOU EMERGE DIFFERENT

IF YOU CAN DO IT AT ALL.....IT WOULD TAKE ME 10 MINUTES OR MORE

I SUPPOSE, THE WHOLE IMMERSION PROCESS IS TOO MUCH LIKE THE

GOING DOWN PROCESS WE SPOKE ABOUT IN OUR SECOND CONFERENCE..

IT CALLS FORTH A LOT OF HUMILITY FROM US TOO.....

NONE OF US LIKE GOING DOWN OR THE LETTING GO WHICH IT CALLS

FORTH FROM US - AND THE MOTHER OF OUR DREAM..

GOING DOWN AND LETTING GO ARE NOT AMONG OUR FAVORITE

ACTIVITIES - FOR OURSELVES OR FOR OUR LOVED ONES

WHICH BOTH PETE ROSE AND MARTIN SHEEN REMINDED US ABOUT IN

THE SECOND PRESENTATION.....

IT CALLS FORTH SO MUCH FAITH AND TRUST.....

TO DO SO, WE NEED SOME COMFORT, SOME ASSURANCE....

LIKE THE NURSE OFFERED TO THE WOMAN IN THE DREAM....

WE NEED SOME KIND OF COMFORT AND ASSURANCE

THAT THIS IS INDEED THE RIGHT THING TO DO....

NOT ONLY THE RIGHT THING BUT THE BEST THING....

THE MOST LIFE GIVING THING TO DO..

THAT WAS THE ROLE OF OUR THIRD PRESENTATION ON THE

OVERWHELMING MERCY OF OUR LOVING CREATOR, THE OCEAN OF

*MERCY WE CAN COUNT ON IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR FATHER..
AND JESUS CHRIST IS THE FACE OF THAT MERCY WE CAN COUNT ON..
AND HERE WE ARE REMINDED OF THE COURAGE AND TRUST OF
CARDINAL BASIL HUME WHO REALIZED AFTER HIS TERMINAL
DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER HOW BLESSED HE WAS TO BE ABLE TO GO
BEFORE HIS GOD EMPTY HANDED AND VULNERABLE, ABLE TO
ACKNOWLEDGE WITH COMPLETE CONFIDENCE -*

"BE MERCIFUL TO ME, I AM A SINNER"

*AND WE COME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY/COMMUNITY THIS WEEKEND/
THIS MORNING TO EXPRESS OUR FAITH IN A MERCIFUL CREATOR
TO GIVE THANKS FOR OUR OWN BAPTISM AND PRAY TOGETHER THAT WE
MAY LIVE OUT FAITHFULLY OUR BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT AS
HUSBANDS, AS FATHERS, AS MEMBERS OF A FAMILY, A PARISH
COMMUNITY, IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND AT OUR PLACE OF
EMPLOYMENT AND INVOLVEMENT.*

*WE SHARE THIS BREAD AND WINE TODAY AS NOURISHMENT FOR OUR
SERVICE , FOR OUR COMMITMENT AND FOR OUR LIFE....*

*AND IF WE LISTEN CLOSELY, AS WE EMERGE FROM THIS EUCHARIST AND
THIS RETREAT, WE CAN HEAR A VOICE FROM THE HEAVENS,*

"YOU ARE MY BELOVED SON; WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED."

"YOU ARE MY BLOVED DAUGHTER; WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED."

NOTICE.....THIS FEAST HAPPENS LITURGICALLY AT THE VERY END OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON AND SCRIPTURALLY AND CHRONOLOGICALLY IT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF JESUS PUBLIC LIFE.....

FIRST OF ALL, IT IS AN EXTENSION OF CHRISTMAS, INCARNATION IN WHICH THE DIVINE DESCENDS, IMMERSSES HIMSELF INTO HUMAN NATURE – BECOMES FULLY HUMAN -

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CONTINUES THE DOWNWARD MOVEMENT – JESUS DID NOT HAVE TO BE BAPTIZED.....

OUR GOD FULLY EMBRACES OUR CONDITION, OUR HUMANITY, DESPITE JOHN'S OBJECTIONS JESUS VOLUNTARILY CHOOSES TO SUBMIT TO THIS INITIATION....

AND POINTS THE WAY FOR US.....

HE BEGINS HIS PUBLIC LIFE MODELLING FOR US HOW TO BOTH BEGIN OUR LIFE AND CONTINUE TO LIVE OUR LIFE.....

INDICATING TO US THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING THE RISK, HAVING THE COURAGE AND FAITH, THE HUMILITY TO BE WILLING TO LET GO AND ALSO GO DOWN HUMBLY , AND TO IMMERSE OURSELVES ...

NOT REMAIN ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER, THE SIDELINES OF LIFE, IF YOU WILL

DIVE IN....THE WATER IS FINE, A LITTLE COLD, BUT FINE....

AND TO TRUST THAT WE WILL EMERGE A NEW PERSON.....

AND EMERGE TO HEAR THE WORDS: “YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER, YOU ARE MY SON, MY BELOVED, WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED”

THAT IS WHEN WE HEAR THOSE WORDS.....

***AFTER WE ARE WILLING TO CLOSE OUR EYES, LET GO, DIVE IN AND
GO DOWN TRUSTING THAT WE WILL EVENTUALLY EMERGE A DIFFERENT
PERSON***

BUT BE ASSURED OUR INITIAL BAPTISM IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.....

BAPTISM IS A PROCESS....

AN ONGOING PROCESS THROUGHOUT OUR LIFE....

***OVER AND OVER, THROUGHOUT LIFE WE ARE CHALLENGED TO REPEAT
THE BAPTISMAL PROCESS UNTIL WE GET IT RIGHT.... AREN'T WE????***

***THAT IS, CLOSE OUR EYES, LET GO, DIVE IN AND GO DOWN HUMBLY
TRUSTING THAT WE WILL CONTINUALLY EMERGE A DIFFERENT, NEWER
PERSON – MORE THE PERSON WE ARE MEANT TO BE AND CAN BE AND
CONTINUING THE BAPTISMAL PROCESS IN OUR LIVES.....***

THAT IS INDEED ONE WAY AND THERE ARE INNUMERABLE OTHERS.....

***LET US PRAY THAT INDEED WE WILL BE WILLING TO CONTINUE THAT
BAPTISMAL PROCESS IN OUR OWN WAY IN OUR OWN LIVES.....***

***LETTING GO, TAKING RISKS, GOING DOWN HUMBLY, TRUSTING THAT WE
WILL ALWAYS EMERGE TO THE WORDS, “YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER, MY
SON, MY BELOVED, WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED”***