



Meditation for the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord
January 10, 2021

You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find great happiness.

[Mark 1:11]

Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works.

[Prayer for the newly baptized, BCP, 308]

Our understandable uncertainty about the church—its relevance, its imperfections, its future—may distract us from the gift of baptism. In our struggle to express an authentic faith we may forget the prayers that were said for us at our baptism, including the prayer that we be given *the gift of joy and wonder in all [God's] works*.

On this Sunday when we observe the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord we reflect on what it means to be a baptized Christian, part of the Body of Christ, a member of the Beloved Community. We remember that being faithful to the vows made on our behalf on the day of our baptism means hearing clearly through the cacophony of the world's praise and blame the words that Jesus heard on the day of his baptism: *in you I find great happiness* (CEB translation).

I often return to the reflections by the late Rachel Held Evans in *Searching for Sunday*:

The great struggle of the Christian life is to take God's name for us, to believe we are beloved and to believe that is enough. . . . In baptism we are identified as beloved children of God, and our adoption into the sprawling, beautiful, dysfunctional family of the church is celebrated.

Baptism declares that God is in the business of bringing dead things back to life, so if you want in on God's business, you better prepare to follow God to all the rock-bottom, scorched-earth, dead-on-arrival corners of this world—including those in your own heart—because that's where God works, that's where God gardens (pp.19, 21, 22)

I belong to the generation who was taught that a life of faith means staying within clear boundaries. Faith was perhaps too often equated with certitude. But I've discovered that my faith gives me a wonderful freedom to imagine what lies beyond the boundaries of what I can know and what I have experienced. Even when I have walked through the valleys where all of us find ourselves at different times in our lives, *the gift of joy and wonder in all [God's works]* has awakened within me. I know that the prayers of my godparents so many years ago have been answered.

I have learned that the most fundamental question of faith is **"Why not?"**

Why not open our hearts and minds to God's surprises?

Why not trust that goodness and light will prevail?

Why not look for infinite possibilities in the most circumscribed circumstances?

Why not embrace the world without seizing it?

Why not allow God to transform us?