

Baptism of the Lord C.19; Isa 40:1-11; Titus 2:11-3:7; Luke 3:15-22

In *Proverbs* it says, “***Where there is no vision the people perish.***”

It’s the year 2019.

What is your vision for this Year?

The *Christmas Season* closes today with a new beginning in the life of Jesus.

Jesus is given a new vision. What does God want of him?

Down by the River Jordan ... Jesus is baptized.

Down by the River Jordan ... Jesus finds his identity.

Down by the River Jordan ... Jesus begins his mission.

Do you remember these words? ... “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

And, God became personally involved with ... your life.

What we do in the span of our lives may bring to us status, fame, fortune, power and many possessions, **but** lasting happiness & fulfillment are not the byproducts *of doing and having*. This truth is in sharp contrast to our culture’s belief. Who, we become, is infinitely more important ... than what we do or what we possess. The meaning and the purpose of life is for us to become a people God has chosen to be his own. **But, what does that mean?**

Actually most people are afraid of **what** God wants! I think many assume that God wants them to be poverty-stricken monks or nuns in some obscure part of the world eating bugs & honey! For some that may be true but it’s not for everyone.

What does God want from you? Do you ever wonder?

Here's the answer: God wants you to be the very best person you can be based on your gifts and your limitations. That is Good News! God does not want to control, stifle, or coerce you into anything. God respects you and all creation to make decisions. God wants you to be who ... you want to be.

When is the last time God ever stopped you?

With courage we could ask God, "What is your vision of my life?"

And God will reply, "Become the best YOU can be."

(Adapted; M. Kelly Message; 01/10)

This is the point of Baptism. We are to become our best selves. How?

Like Jesus we too *find our identity and our purpose* in life.

Jesus heard, "*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*"

Jesus had decided to be his best self. Jesus had decided to be the face of God's love

...reaching out to the unlovable, the poor, the outcast.

Jesus is God's love in action. Like Jesus before us, *when we decide to be like God, when we decide to love, then we have found our identity.*

We have found our meaning and purpose.

We have found a vision to live out of.

2 Since the beginning God has attempted to get people's attention and to call them *into a commitment* to live with principles, values, and a sense of "sacredness". Sometimes the people heard and responded to God, and sometimes they ignored God. **God kept trying. God kept working at getting their attention.**

A story is told about a little girl who *sort of* understands that about God. She was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story.

From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek.

She was *alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again.*

Finally she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, Sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed,

"God's getting better at it, isn't he?"

God got better at it. After untold efforts to win our allegiance and our hearts, God took on human form, walking among us and living with us so that we would understand. **The Incarnation, *the Word made Flesh*, is ultimate love.**

It is in the living, breathing person of Jesus that we really see all things we call holy, such as forgiveness, sharing, joy, vision, courage, perseverance, and especially love. We might think we understand love, for example, but when we receive totally unconditional love from another person, *love takes on a completely* new meaning for us. Jesus shows us the ultimate example of love, namely, God's love. Seeing this example *in the flesh* makes all the difference *in the world* for us.

(Adapted; esermans.com.10; God's Getting Better)

That is the Vision God has for us – to freely choose to be our best, to be like Jesus, a living & breathing love in people's lives. We literally are to,

Go up on a high mountain, to be ***heralds of glad tidings*** and shout by words and deeds: ***Here comes your God who rules by a strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him.*** Here is the Way to happiness.

What is your vision for 2019?

At this Liturgy of Baptism during this New Year, consider being part of God's vision, not just for yourself ... but for all of us too! Like Jesus, become the ***incarnate love of God*** in people's lives, become your best and experience meaning, purpose and most of all, joy.

Don't get just a little wet, c'mon live it up !!!! ...

...take the Baptismal Plunge and change the world!

And, Happy New Year!!!