

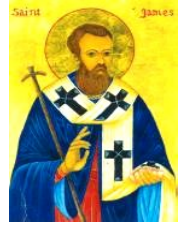
**2ND SUNDAY
ORD TIME
YR B 2018
13 / 14
JANUARY**

The Parish of St James



Coorparoo.

**An Augustinian Parish:
Archdiocese of Brisbane.**



Moderator's Musings

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD - A REFLECTION!

In my homily last Sunday, I shared the following quote from Pope Francis who urges us to respond to reality in a committed way and holds up the example of Jesus, who he says, *'did more than just see; he touched people's lives, he spoke to them, helped them and showed kindness to those in need. Not only this, but he felt strong emotions and he wept (Jn 11:33-44). And he worked to put an end to suffering, sorrow, misery and death.'*

If I didn't believe that God weeps at the suffering we go through, I'd be tempted to give it all away. Far from being an unchanging God, our God is not uncaring at the tragic events that touch us but is in solidarity with us.

The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, celebrated soon after the Epiphany, is about God's solidarity. This Baptism is not something Jesus went through just to be nice but represents for Jesus an immersion into the hopes and fears and dreams of a struggling humanity, a pledge of solidarity with all who look forward to the final victory of God over all that is not-God. Through this One Beloved, all will come to know their belovedness before God;

On a pilgrimage to North Africa in 2004, I saw some ancient baptismal fonts where the person to be baptised went down several steps, often in darkness, into the immersion pool before ascending the stairs on the other side and emerging into the light of a great cathedral. In the refurbished church in Kyabram, Victoria, there is a below-ground font where I stood several times in a foot of water at the Easter Vigil baptizing children and adults.

It may help our faith to remain strong if we realise that Baptism is a big sacrament, in fact the biggest. We need to be very careful not to make this Sacrament of our Christian identity small; we need big signs, plenty of water.

Jesus submits to baptism by John because that is 'what God wants' and in doing so, he anticipates his subsequent submission to suffering and death because that too will be 'what God wants'. This submission is Jesus' entry into even deeper solidarity with humanity to fulfill his role as the Servant, prophesied in Isaiah 42, sensitive to human frailty, the Christ-figure who, 'does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets... does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame' – familiar words of the Scriptures from Holy Week.

In each Synoptic Gospel account, the 'opening' of the heavens and the divine words spoken signal the end of the long 'drought' of communication from heaven - *'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'* – words that surely echo God's joy in his love for each of us.

Jesus heralded a God who does not show partiality, a God we can be sure of, a God who opens eyes, a God who loves our ragged human family. How often we are tempted to blame God when things go wrong, asking whether this is God's punishment or, God forbid, even God's will!

Jesus, born at Christmas, is *'God-with-us'* and the adult Jesus likewise is *'God-in-our-midst'* - whose mission is to reclaim our lives and make us a renewed people. Our faith is in Jesus' solidarity with the burdened, sinful lot of humankind. Might we manage a little humour when we feel our human burden very much, like the cartoon character who groaned, *'I'm all grieved out!'*

I've always found the words spoken from heaven at Jesus' baptism a wonderful anchor for prayer... *'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'* Our God enjoys us, so why not listen to his personal word to each of us... *'You are my Son... my Daughter... my Beloved; my favour rests on you!'*

Fr Dave Austin OSA