

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord: Take the Plunge!

Jesus saw John baptizing. He saw people there with John, sincere people, responding to John's call and committing themselves to the New Kingdom of God that John said was at hand. Jesus saw people seeking to change the world by changing themselves, by repenting their sins and reforming their lives.

Jesus saw John, the last of the prophets of the Old Order and the first of the prophets of the New Order. John proclaimed that God will triumph. He said that the One Who Is To Come would be here soon.

Jesus saw the sincere people, the impassioned John, the determination for God to reign. Jesus wanted to be baptized. He would proclaim to the world that He was one with these people. John immediately recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, infinitely superior to John, but Jesus told him to baptize him. The people washed by John's baptism and consecrated to prepare for God must know that the Christ was united to them.

Jesus seized the moment that John was offering. He took the plunge. He went down into the water and was baptized. And the voice from heaven rang out, "This is my Beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased."

Take the plunge. Seize the moment. Seize the day, *Carpe Diem* in the Latin poem by Horace. (Horace's *Odes* 1:11). The pagan poet was not talking about tomorrow, though, he was only talking about making the best use of the day. The Christian, though, seizes the day to take advantage of the moment that God gives us to allow him to change our lives and His world. The Christian seizes the day to prepare for tomorrow.

So a senior couple moves in down the block. They seem to be nice people, but they mostly keep to themselves. You welcome them, but then you let them be, a few waves here and there, but no real contact. Every Sunday you drive by their house on the way to Church and you notice their car in the driveway. "Perhaps they are not Christian," you think. Then you notice that they put up a few Christmas decorations. "Maybe they just don't go to Church," you wonder. But you let it be. You'd like to invite them to Church, but you feel a bit awkward. After all, you rarely speak with them. A few months later you learn that the husband has had a stroke and is in the hospital. Should you visit? You barely know them. But you take the plunge and go to the hospital. They really appreciate your concern. A friendship develops. The man is able to go home, but he is limited in what he can do. So you stop by frequently, chew the rag, and help with some of their chores. As your leaving one Saturday, you say that you'll stop by on Sunday after Mass. They ask, "Would you mind if we come with you?" God's grace entered their lives because you seized the day, you went down into the river, you made that visit to the hospital.

Then there's that kid in school who is basically obnoxious. His language is bad.

His attitude is worse. Everything in his world is as black as the clothes he wears. You figure that there is no reason to try to be friends with him. There is no reason, except that God wants the kid to know that God loves him. You see him alone one day and decide that you need to take the plunge into the river. "We're having an ice cream social after the Life Teen Mass this weekend. Do you want to come? It's cool, and there will be at least 50 kids there." You figure that you will be shot down, but to your surprise he says, "OK." He meets you at the Church, and he likes it. It's not just the ice cream social he likes. He likes being with kids who are positive about life. His life gradually changes because you seized the day. You went into the river and declared yourself one with someone who was searching for God.

There are many graced moments in our lives. There are many times that we can allow God to draw us closer to Him. Some of these times are obvious, like confirmation, marriage, conventions and retreats, the celebration of the critical moments in the faith life of our children and grandchildren. There are other times that might not seem so obvious, ordinary times when we are called to make the ordinary extraordinary by seizing the day, respond to God's call and plunge into the river. We are called to seize the day and be One with all who are seeking the Kingdom of God.

May Jesus, baptized by John, give us the courage to join Him in the Jordan River.