

I haven't been a pastor all that long in the grand scheme of things. Nevertheless, there have been a few baptisms along the way. And I wish I could tell you this story about a cute young couple, who soon after the mother gave birth to their precious child, that one of their absolute first priorities was to call the church administrator, who then got hold of the pastor to schedule their newborn baby's baptism as soon as humanly possible. I wish I could tell you that all parents cannot possibly contain their excitement level and outright eagerness to come to the church for such a sacrament. I wish I could tell you that it is never because of the grandparents or great-grandparents' influence that their family, quite simply, caves in, just to satisfy them even for a day. I wish I could tell you that all things are perfect in the baptismal care department for the church universal.

Regardless of how it happens: when the parents stand before their sisters and brothers in Christ, and even before Jesus Christ Himself, and they promise to, among other things, "live with [the child] among God's faithful people, bring him to the word of God and the holy supper, teach her the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in his hands the holy scriptures, and nurture her in faith and prayer." The pastor flat-out asks

after all of that: “Do you promise to help your child grow in the Christian faith and life?” Well, they can’t exactly say, “No!” right there and then and disappoint grandma and grandpa and everyone else. So, of course, they say, with *not* the utmost conviction, “We do.”

I wish I could tell you of this same young cute people who brought their child back the next Sunday. Maybe even once a month for the heck of it, just to test out those baptismal waters? I wish I could tell you such things happen on a regular basis in the post-baptism new life. However, when they don’t, the rest of us who were there to witness said baptism, and even made a joint-promise to support the young cute couple and even cuter child; when they don’t show up again, we have this tendency to reduce them to nothing short of the “rabble” as described in the first reading this morning.

Except the rabble of the Israelites getting out of Egypt had a craving, and not just for better food. They craved a table inside a place they could call home. They craved opening rounds of meaning, identity, and purpose, and a main course of the most life-satisfying God. For God not to be at a distance throwing down scraps of manna from some heavenly kitchen, but for this God to be right in-step with them throughout their arduous journey; to somehow

see first-hand that not only does God love the world, but that God treasured them, too, on a personal level almost too close for comfort.

The rabble today, as we so call them, have a strong craving too. I wish I could tell you it's a craving for Communion on a weekly basis and getting to know the Nicene Creed, for starters. And yet, it's still a divine craving: for a peaceful home and surrounding community to have their family dinners (when they can), to find some sense of purpose and meaning and identity in a full-time job/full-time parent/full-time volunteer world that refuses to allow them any time whatsoever to consider such depth of life, to experience this life-satisfying God not just on the seventh day, but every day through all the chaos; that God can somehow, someway, manage the time with all the inner-workings of the entire world, to still be with them too. The rabble have a strong craving, and I have a feeling that it's our craving too.

Yes, we find some level of satisfaction when we eat that bread and drink that cup, and read in this B-I-B-L-E that Jesus loves me, and take it all to the Lord in prayer, to this friend we have in Jesus. But we know our cravings don't stop there. We crave God in the in-between moments too, just like the rabble do. We may have a few more check-marks on our baptismal

expectations report, but we, by no means, have this all figured out to show the rabble how it's done.

We are all on this baptismal river of life together, immersed in these waves that we have no idea what will bring, onto who knows what shores they'll crash upon. We even have no idea that if we do not see that cute baptized child ever again in our sanctuary, that God still won't be right in-step with her all the way to the end and into eternity. So, when we make a promise to support the cute young couple and the even cuter child, we should also say, that we have our questions and fears and doubts too. We crave this God as much as you, and sometimes wonder where in the universe can God possibly be?

And we confess, no, we proclaim that the strongest craving is not ultimately filled by any church, but by God. A craving of some holy one loving us so much to the point of thinking we're worth dying for, a craving for some holy one to think we that we have some kind of gifts to impact the lives of others for the better, for some holy one to still believe that this whole world is worth loving all the way to the end and beyond. To God be the glory forever and ever indeed! Amen.