

THE TWO BAPTISMS

2nd Sunday Easter

Year B

by Dcn. Tom McConnell

Acts 4:32-35; Ps 118:2-4,13-15,22-24; 1Jn 5:1-6; Jn 20:19-31

A story is told of King Aengus, the legendary king of Ireland and his baptism by St Patrick. At the baptismal ceremony, the bishop moved his sharp-pointed crosier (staff) and inadvertently pierced the king's foot. The king did not move or complain. At the end of the ceremony, St. Patrick looked down and saw the pool of blood at the king's foot. Realizing what had happened, he begged the king's pardon, and then asked why the king had said nothing after his foot was pierced. The king's answer was "*I thought it was part of the ritual.*" The king was obviously mistaken, yet he had a point. Baptism is not just a matter of water only; it is a matter of water and blood.

The synoptic gospels recount the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan at the beginning of His public ministry (1st chapter of Mark and 3rd chapters of both

Matthew & Luke). Yet later, we hear Jesus saying that He still had another baptism with which He would be baptized (Luke 12:50). He was speaking of the climactic events of His life...His Passion...His suffering and death on the cross. That was His other baptism...not a baptism of water, but a baptism of blood. When James and John came to Him asking for reserved seats at His right hand and at His left, He warned them that the big challenge of following Him was accepting this painful baptism of blood. Jesus asked them, “*Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*” (Mark 10:38). Today’s 2nd reading from the 1st Letter of St. John, stresses the point that Jesus Christ “*came by water and blood ... not by water alone, but by water and blood*” (1 John 5:6).

Last Saturday evening, 32

**adults/children/infants were baptized here in the
Basilica on Easter Vigil. Easter is a time to relive and
renew our baptism. That's why often times the
liturgy the Sprinkling Rite replaces the Penitential
Rite. Today's 2nd reading reminds us that our
baptism, like the baptism of Jesus, is not just a water
ceremony, but also a blood commitment...a
commitment unto death. Baptism by water takes but
a few minutes...baptism by blood is a life-long
commitment. By baptism with water, we become
children of God...by baptism with blood, we fight the
daily battle of being and living the life of God's sons
and daughters in a world that accepts, celebrates, and
even rewards un-godly values. The passage,
therefore, tries to show the practical implications in**

daily life of the new relationship that Christians have with God through baptism.

The 5th chapter of St. John's epistle passage begins: "*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, is begotten by God...*" (1 John 5:1). Then it proceeds to show us in practical terms what it means to be begotten by (or born of) God. "*...for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world*" (verse 4). Here we see a direct connection between believing and behaving. Being a born-again child of God is not just a badge of honor; it's also a banner of responsibility. It means that we've been empowered to challenge the world and its values and to emerge victorious.

Two of the central pillars of the Christian life are faith and love. Verse 4 goes on to say: "*...the victory that conquers the world is our faith.*" Having then explained what faith means in practical

life...overcoming the world....John also shows what love means. “...we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments.” (1 Jn 5:2-3)

For John, love means loving God and all of God’s children. Spiritual love of God shows itself in practical concern for our brothers and sisters. God’s commandment is that we love our neighbor, our fellow members of God’s family. Fellow members of God’s household include our fellow church members, all who are baptized into Christ...and all men and women everywhere, created in God’s image and likeness as we are. The 24th Psalm tells us that “*The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.*” (Psalm 24:1) Therefore, aren’t all men and women, made in the image of God, our

brothers and our sisters? And, as St. John tells us elsewhere in his epistle, “*Those who say, ‘I love God’, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.*” (1 John 4:20)

Truly, a water and blood baptismal challenge for us all! May we acknowledge that challenge, face it with faith and love, and conquer the world for Christ! May God Bless You!