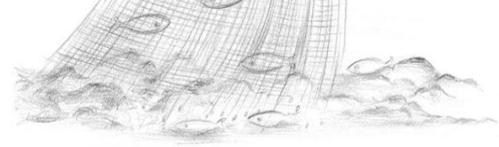




Journey of Enrichment

2011 - Year of Shared Spirituality

"Put out into deep water,
and let down the nets for a catch." Luke 5,4



Baptism

"Being children of God, members of the People of God"

In his extensive conversations on baptism, St. John Eudes speaks of baptism as a new birth, as covenant, being baptized in the name of the Trinity and as an experience of "death and resurrection." This latter insight underscores our reflection as we explore the way to new life offered to us through baptism.

The disciples were invited by Jesus to follow Him. They were excited by his approach to life; his manner of relating and his understanding of society. They were beginning to see Him as a possible redeemer for Israel. But they did not manage to understand everything. When it comes to the moment of the passion and death, they abandon him; they are afraid and feel disappointed ... Jesus was not the person they thought him to be. He was killed like so many others in Israel. In the most crucial moment of his life, they abandon their friend. However, in the Easter experience, the followers of Jesus recognize him as the Messiah and decide to be faithful to his new project.

Jn 20: 19-22... tells the story of the disciples with the crucified-risen Christ as the beginning of something new. *On the evening of that day, the first of the week, the disciples had the doors tightly closed for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and said, "Peace be with you" ... As the Father has sent me so I send you ... Receive the Holy Spirit*

We highlight some aspects of the Easter experience:

1. Jesus breaks into the lives of the disciples and opens them to a whole new dimension. This dimension is not marked by the human logic of resentment and violence, but by a new life characterized by reconciliation, love and peace. Jesus did not reproach them for anything. His words were: *"Peace be with you and he showed them his wounds."* As if to say: Look, I am, I am alive, and fear does not have to be the center of your life because death does not have the final word. God sent his Son to give life and life abundantly.

2. Through his presence Jesus reveals the paternal and maternal face of God. Jesus recognizes himself as the Father's beloved Son. Thus, he also feels and acts like a brother/sister to all. The disciples recognize Jesus through their Easter experience. It is from this point on that Jesus' disciples can reread his life as a new way of being in solidarity; of including all; of becoming a neighbor and a brother/sister. It is a life of forgiveness, of being close to and touching the reality of the needy and of going beyond borders. Now they understand that we are not isolated, *without any bond or link between us but rather we are made into a people¹*, the great family of those baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church 781

3. Jesus missions those who have met Him. This sending is to witness to the new Kingdom of peace, love, reconciliation and compassion, which they had themselves experienced. It is to continue Jesus' "life and mission" (SJE), to practice and transmit his new attitudes. SME also echoes these sentiments: "*Behold, beloved daughters, the example we should imitate... Have the same thoughts, feelings and emotions of Jesus the Good Shepherd, whose image you must be in the midst of your beloved flocks*" (Conf 6).

4. "*Receive the Holy Spirit*" (John 20:22). Now Jesus presents himself as the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, making them a new creation and entrusting them with his mission. "*I baptize you with water ... The person on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain, is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God*" (Jn 1: 26-34). This is the great confirmation to have been chosen to witness what they have experienced. The Holy Spirit will be their guide, strength, light and consolation.

We can now have a better understanding of SJE's insistence on speaking of baptism as an Easter experience. Through Baptism we are born to new life, the life of the new family of God, which follows Christ and is sent to be His witness through the power of the Spirit.

We can recognize in St. Mary Euphrasia and St. John Eudes a woman and a man conscious of their baptismal commitment, of their experience of peace, love and the inclusion of the excluded. This commitment comes from the Spirit and a strong conviction and sense of being the beloved daughter/son of God.

Questions for reflection:

How do I understand my baptism? Is it significant in my Christian life, or simply as a major event of my childhood? Do I live my baptism as a life commitment for peace, inclusion, love, and becoming more fully human? How can I open myself to the Spirit so as to have a deep sense of being God's son/ daughter, called and sent to live something new?

PRAYER:

Jesus, I adore you as my Lord,
Whom I must follow and imitate in all things,
In keeping with the public and solemn profession I made at the time of my Baptism...
And which I wish to renew today

...

Grant me the grace to fulfill this commitment perfectly.
Accomplish this in me and for me,
According to the perfection of your will, Amen
(*Praying with John Eudes*, page 5)

READINGS

St. Mary Euphrasia's Conferences, Chap 6

Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, 1989, Chap 27-33

Alison, James, *Knowing Jesus*, London: SPCK 1993 & 1998

Alison, James, "*Beyond Theory: a salvific unpicking of Atonement's knots*" Article