

27-28 June 2020

13th Sun in OT (A)

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10:37-42

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

In celebrating the sacraments, priests can tend to be called “*alter Christus*” or “another Christ”. But in reality, everyone who is baptized can be called “another Christ”. That’s what we believe happens when people are baptized; they are immersed into Jesus’s death and resurrection, so that they truly take on his identity as their own: a beloved child of God. Another Christ, hence a Christian.

Saint Paul is trying to remind the Romans of the sheer significance of their baptism. Apparently, they had forgotten how important it was, or how the grace of their baptism had to continue to unfold in their lives. Hence his classic rhetorical question, “Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

At baptism, we were buried with Christ in his death, but also rose with him in his resurrection to newness of life. Newness of life in terms of forgiveness of sin, but also literally taking on a new identity as a Christian. Becoming a Christian means not just taking on the name of Christ, but also taking on what that means: “an anointed one”, anointed to share in his mission and ministry as priest, prophet, and king.

For those of us who were baptized as infants, chances are we don't remember anything about our actual baptism (if you do, that's impressive), except maybe through pictures or hopefully keeping your baptismal candle. So, like the Romans to whom St. Paul wrote, we have to be reminded continually of the importance of our baptism, and what our being claimed for Jesus commits us to: nothing less than sharing in Jesus's mission to make God known.

Those who were baptized or received into the Church as adults, you can witness to the power and the joy of your baptism and confirmation, of letting the grace of these beautiful sacraments of initiation guide how you live your lives now.

Baptism is the new beginning of our journey with Christ. Yes, it identifies us with him and makes us God's own children, but it also calls us to embrace a lifelong process, a lifelong journey of following Christ and letting him transform our lives to be more like him. Hence why we renew our baptismal promises from time to time.

In our gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus concludes his talk to his disciples about how they're supposed to embrace his mission, before he sends them forth. And there's no embracing Jesus's mission without embracing the cross in our lives. Thus Jesus says, "whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me ... whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Again, by virtue of our baptism, we have already been immersed into Christ's death and resurrection, but that Paschal Mystery will be experienced in our lives over and over again: through all our pains and sorrows, our trials and sufferings, but also through the joys and new beginnings that God sends us.

Through our baptism (and confirmation), we are initiated into Christ's mission, to make God known. A lifelong mission to follow him as his disciples, to conform our lives more and more to him, to love and serve our neighbor, especially those in need.

Our identity in Christ, our following him, sometimes forces us to make choices, to say “yes” to him and his will in our lives, and “no” to what is not from him. These may come over the course of a “normal” day (whatever counts for a normal day right now), like whether to wear those face masks in public so to keep yourself and others safe, or to be patient with those disagree with us on X, Y, or Z, or to say no to that voice of prejudice, that “devil on our shoulder”, whenever we encounter others.

Whatever our unique calling or vocation from God is, we are all meant to be another Christ to each other and to the world.