

'WHOLISTIC LOVE'

Baptism of the Lord - 13th January 2019

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 3:15-16 AND 21-22

We listen to today's Gospel in two parts.

Firstly, about *John the Baptist* preparing the people for Jesus.

Secondly, *Jesus* praying after his baptism and what happened.

*"As the people were filled with expectation,
and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John,
whether he might be the Messiah,
John answered all of them by saying,
'I baptize you with water;
but one who is more powerful than I is coming;
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

*Now when all the people were baptized,
and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,
the heaven was opened,
and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.
And a voice came from heaven,*

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' "

We are told in the next verse

'Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work.'

THE GOSPEL OF PRAYER

Luke's Gospel is sometimes called the *Gospel of Prayer*.
The author of Luke's Gospel teaches and gives examples
to a mainly Gentile Christian community about prayer.

We note from Gospel passage above
that it was when Jesus was praying
that the Holy Spirit descended upon him
and the voice from heaven declared who Jesus was.

STS BASIL & THEODOSIUS LIVING THEIR BAPTISMAL MISSION

In today's homily, as we reflect on our own Baptism,
we remember two saints whose feast days are in early January -

St Basil of Caesarea on January 2nd and
St Theodosius the Cenobiarch

Both were people of prayer.
Both reflected on their baptismal call and how to live out their mission.
Both found God calling them to change direction in life.
Both strived for a spirituality
based on loving God wholly and loving neighbour.
Both believed in a community that cares.
Both made a difference to the world then, and to our world today.

Saint Basil lived from around 330 AD to 379.
His writings on sharing wealth and helping your neighbour
still challenge us today.

Saint Theodosius lived from around 424 AD to 529 AD.

Both had a vision of hospitality.
Both wanted an inclusive love of neighbour.
Both saw the need for a communal wholistic care for neighbour
where medical knowledge, nursing, food, clothing, shelter, food and hospitality
were inter-connected with spirituality.

SAINT BASIL

St Basil had been a university student who completed his study in Athens,
and was baptised as Jesus called him and gifted him with the meaning of life.
He toured some of the monastic communities of the Middle East,
before establishing a monastic community himself.
Once settled in this rural lifestyle,
God called him to be a priest and later a bishop in an urban world.
God can invite us to change direction in our lives as well.

He is the patron saint of hospital administrators.
Communal care provision was provided for children, the elderly,
travelers, orphans, the sick and others in need.
His homilies during a severe drought at the time are famous today,
for Christians living out a commitment to social justice in their love of neighbour.

SAINT THEODOSIUS

St Theodosius also provided communal care provision,
including those with mental health issues
and people who were penitential and needing space to change their lives.
Originally on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land,
he founded a ministry of prayer just outside of Jerusalem.
Later he founded a monastery outside of Bethlehem
where people were encouraged to pray in their own languages during the week.
There were chapels for several languages
and another place for the needs of people with mental illness and for penitents.
And then all would come together for prayer in Greek.

(In the verbal homily several instances of communal practice are provided from the lives of St Basil of Caesarea and St Theodosius the Cenobiarch.)

WHOLISTIC LIVING

In the light of our present knowledge of medicine and psychology, and understanding of scripture, we could improve on their mission. Yet their essential link between applied science and spirituality is not always appreciated today.

Part of our mission, our baptismal call, is to affirm that essential link between Jesus and our knowledge of life. Our call is based on the invitation of Jesus to love God and to love our neighbour. **To love our neighbour in a wholistic way as people.** A love based on the dignity of people, created in God's image and likeness.

Let us reflect this week on how we live our baptismal call in a wholistic way. Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/011319.cfm>]

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