

Baptism of the Lord - 2021

On the right road in the wrong direction

A man was traveling down the country one day. His journey brought him along some by-roads, where the signposts were few and far between. After a while, he was unsure if he was on the right road, so he decided to ask the first person he saw. Eventually he came across a farmer driving his cows home for milking. He stopped the car, and asked him if he was on the right road to Somewhere, just to give the place a name.

The farmer told him that he certainly was on the right road. My friend expressed his thanks, and was about to move forward when the farmer added, in a very nonchalant way, "You're on the right road, but you're going in the wrong direction!" -Today's reflection on Jesus' baptism challenges us to examine whether we are on the right road and moving in the right direction for our eternal destiny. Fr. Tony(<http://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

Knowing the Secret Right from the Start

In Princeton, New Jersey, there is a legendary tale about the eminent scientist Albert Einstein walking in front of a local inn and being mistaken for a bell boy by a dowager who had just arrived in a luxury sedan. She orders him to carry her luggage into the hotel, and, according to the story, Einstein does so, receives a small tip, and then continues on to his office to ponder the mysteries of the universe.

True or not, the story is delightful, precisely because we savor from the beginning a secret the dowager does not know: the strange-looking, ruffled little man is the most celebrated intellect of our time.

Some stories gain their power from our knowing the story's secret from the start. The Gospel of Mark is just such a story. The secret of Mark's Gospel is the identity of Jesus Christ. In the very first sentence of the Gospel story, Mark lifts the veil and lets us know the secret when he says that this is "... the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Jesus is the Son of God, that's the secret, and lest we miss it, this hidden truth is confirmed in the story's opening episode, when Jesus, coming up out of the waters of baptism, sees the Holy Spirit descending upon him like a dove from the

heavens, which have been torn open like a piece of cloth, and hears the very voice of God telling the secret: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). (by Thomas G. Long from *Shepherds and Bathrobes*, CSS Publishing Company)

The Gift of Relationship

Some of you may remember an episode from the old Andy Griffith Television show in which the Women's Historical Society discovered that a living descendant of a Revolutionary War hero was living right there in Mayberry. The news generated excitement and curiosity throughout the town as people made plans for recognizing the hero's relative. Barney Fife, of course, twisted his own family tree to the point that he put himself in line for the honor.

The rest of the townspeople felt special just because someone among them was related to a hero. However, everyone was shocked when the person was finally revealed. A careful analysis of the genealogical records determined that the hero's descendent was none other than Otis Campbell, the town drunk. Despite suggestions to find a "substitute Otis" for the presentation, the real Otis showed up for the ceremony true to form. When the ladies finally give him the plaque,

Otis holds it in his hands for a moment, and then decides instead to give the plaque to the town. He tells them, "Just because you're the descendent of a hero doesn't make you one too. So I would like to present this plaque to the town of Mayberry, to which I am just proud to belong." Well, aren't we all? Aren't we all just happy to belong, to be included! That's what happens to us together in baptism, we all are included with Christ and with one another. It's the gift of relationship, of belonging, of recognizing we are all in this together - together with Jesus and with one another. (by Clayton A. Cobb from Something We Do Together)