

I'm thinking about what connects us to one another.
There are our physical traits:
hair, eyes, even the way we walk.
Line up the cousins
and it's obvious who is biologically related.
There's more than biology, though,
that connects us.

There are also signs and symbols,
like mascots and logos.
When we see a familiar one,
we know we have something in common...or not.
Born and raised in the South
(by two die hard Ohio State fans),
I am keenly aware of how symbols,
like colors, unite and divide us.
It might just be sports talk, right (!?),
no one takes it that seriously...
Hopefully,
these are symbolic unions or divisions, not
definitive.
Hopefully, we are connected by more than a symbol
or our love for a team.

Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.

This rubric is at the top of page 298 in the Book of Common Prayer.

Rubrics are directives for our liturgy, our worship. They provide order and process for all our ways or worship.

Some of them are permissive, some are prescriptive. Typically they tell us how to do what we do.

Rare is the rubric that instructs our understanding or tells us the meaning of a sacrament.

Except this one.

Baptism, this rubric says,
is what binds us,
to God and one another.

Notice the word *indissoluble*.

Our bond with God, we declare,
is unable to be destroyed!

Colors, mascots, every symbol will come and go;
 water poured on our forehead,
 crosses marked with oil,
they are here to stay.

Each Gospel writer tells us about Jesus' baptism in their own way.

Each with its own nuances and details that may or may not matter.

There are two details in today's Gospel that matter most, to me, today.

First, Jesus was praying.

Neither Mark, Matthew, or John

mention Jesus praying at this particular moment.

Only Luke specifically includes Jesus praying here, after his Baptism.

Then, the heavens open and God speaks,

"You are my Son, the beloved;

with you I am well pleased."

Here is Christ,

claimed and proclaimed and God's own,

pleasing in the sight of God.

As in the first days of creation,

the heavens break open and it is good.

The other important detail here,
I confess, is not actually in today's reading;
it's what happens next.
I noticed it for the first time this year.
Located right after Jesus' baptism,
Luke includes a genealogy.
We don't read it on Sunday morning,
likely because it is long
and the names are hard to read.
When I came upon it this year,
I wondered how I never noticed or heard it.
And, I wondered why the Gospel writer included
a genealogy.

Genealogies establish our heritage.
There are quite a few in our scriptures.
There are two of Jesus.
One in the Gospel of Matthew and one in Luke.
Matthew links Jesus to King David and Abraham,
satisfying the promises of covenant and law,
which is crucial in Matthew's Gospel.
Matthew's also includes outsiders and women;
thus, wrapping Gentiles fully
into Jesus' lineage, and God's covenant with Israel,
another crucial theme in Matthew's Gospel.
In the Gospel of Matthew,
Jesus' heritage is law, covenant, and inclusion.

Luke's is different.
Like the Gospel of Matthew,
it includes King David and Father Abraham.
Unlike the Gospel of Matthew,
Luke lists only men, the patriarchs,
beginning with Joseph
(which the Gospel acknowledges is complicated).
Luke's genealogy, though, goes further back than
Matthew:
all the way to Adam, the first human.
Luke traces Jesus' heritage to the beginning,
fully uniting Christ to all of humanity.
With this lineage,
Luke reveals the full mystery of the incarnation:
Jesus is fully human and divine.

Today, we come close to this mystery,
the mystery of the incarnation.
In a moment, as we baptize Arthur,
as we pray,
something will happen.
Water, our water,
becomes bound up in the ministry of Christ.

By our prayers,
water becomes the vehicle of our inheritance:
our humanity bound to Christ bound to Adam;
our humanity bound to Christ bound to God.

Like Adam, we are God's creation.
Like Christ, we are God's beloved.
And, like Adam and Christ, God finds pleasure in us.
This is the mystery of the incarnation:
our lives woven into the life of Christ,
the redemption of all creation.
This was God's intent:
to fully inhabit, know, and redeem us.

Through our baptism,
we are adopted into his heritage,
binding our humanity to his divinity.
By it, we receive the reconciling grace of God
in our lives:
we are bound to God,
an indissoluble bond, unbreakable.
It is a great mystery:
God's goodness given to us, in our lives, forever.

When I come close to this mystery,
there is a reckoning within me.
I come face to face with all my judgments about
myself and my neighbor.
I catch a glimpse of all the ways I try to hoard
or control God's grace.
Rooted in God's love and grace,
I find I am bound to a way of love
that honors all of creation.
This love knows there is enough:
enough love, enough mercy,
enough of all we need for all of creation.
This love unites us to one another:
surpassing every division and making us one.
The mystery of the incarnation makes us one body
in Christ:
a full revelation of God's creative, reconciling grace
for the whole world.

When we root ourselves in this mystery,
our lives bound up in Christ and one another,
we are transformed.
We are no longer ruled by our desires or fears.
Now, we are God's beloved,
recipients of God's grace.
We know who and whose we are,
inheritors of the promises
to Joseph, David, Abraham, and Adam.

May we know and whose we are.
May we know the depth of God's love for us and our
neighbors.
May our lives be rooted in this love.