

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

2 Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16; Psalm 89; Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10: 37-42

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: July 2, 2017

Baptism changes everything. Everything changes with baptism.

Baptism opens our eyes to see clearly who we are—adopted children of God, beloved by God.

Baptism teaches us how to live by dying with Jesus to whatever is temporary or superficial and to set our sights on the things of heaven which last forever.

For we have been baptized **into** the very person of Jesus and **into** his death.

Dying with Jesus in the life-giving waters of baptism,

we rise up with him into the newness of a life which only he can bring.

We are gifted with membership in a new family where water is thicker than blood.

Baptism opens our eyes to see clearly that all human beings are children of God, and thus every human person my brother or my sister.

Baptism does not set us apart as better than others but rather opens our eyes to see that we are all related, that we are all part of the one family of God.

For “in Jesus” there are no “*others*” nor are there “*outsiders*”, there is no such thing as “*them*” and “*us*”---there is only “**US**”.

So, “in Jesus”, we are called to welcome, to befriend, to care for all of God’s children, especially the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.

We are challenged to die to “clan” and “class” and “country”

and rise with Jesus to a new, more generous way of loving others without distinction.

To love Jesus does not mean we stop loving our blood brothers and sisters,

those of our own nuclear family, but that we love him more, that we love him above all.

Loving Jesus in such a way, seeking first His kingdom,

leads us to love every person as a brother or sister.

To love the stranger as if they were our brother or sister is not easy in today's world. To fulfill the command of Jesus to welcome Him in the stranger can be difficult in the fear-filled climate of our country.

In the fear-filled years after the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001, many people made scapegoats of all immigrants because of the actions of a few. Cardinal McCarrick of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., who was one of the driving forces behind the launch of "Justice for Immigrants--A Journey of Hope—a Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform," said the following in 2005 when talking about this project by the U.S. bishops: *"It is my belief, and that of my brother bishops, that our nation can meet the challenge of ensuring national security without closing America's door to the oppressed and downtrodden."*

Cardinal McCarrick's words spoken over a decade ago still ring true today. Fear of the stranger causes us to shut the door of our country and ultimately to shut the door of our hearts. Fear causes us to distance ourselves from welcoming and loving Christ in the stranger.

The leaders of our Church---from Pope Francis and the U.S. Bishops and on down---continue to challenge us as adopted children of God to welcome Christ coming to us under the guise of the refugee or the immigrant. We are called to open our eyes and unlock the door of our heart to our brothers and sisters in need. It's what our baptism demands. It's what being joined to Jesus in baptism means. Dying with him to our fears and prejudices, we rise with him to a new way of loving.

Recently Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, urging solidarity with people facing deportation, called on the President and Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. The Cardinal said: *"You really have to believe in inflicting cruelty on innocent people to choose to support the policies we've seen in recent months This isn't about border security. It's about being attentive to the reality of people who are already in our communities."*

We are much more than one nation under God, we are one family under God—the entire human family stretched across the earth is one family under God. Loving Jesus Christ more than father or mother, son or daughter means expanding our understanding of family. When Christ is the first and primary love of our life, we can then welcome strangers as our brothers and sisters.

The sterile woman of Shunem welcomes the stranger, Elisha,
and is blessed with new life.

The blessing which flows from welcoming the stranger **is** the blessing of new life.
Living out the virtue of hospitality enables new life to bloom in our midst,
as our family expands with the expansion of our heart.

Baptism opens our eyes to this mystery,
that while we were still strangers and alienated from God, Christ died for us,
so that we might become adopted children of our Heavenly Father.

Daily we are called and challenged by God to live out the mystery of our baptism
by dying to sin—to whatever limits our loving of others---
and rising with Christ to new life, to a more expansive and generous way of loving.

As we do so, Christ Jesus opens the doors **into His life**
and grants us a real share
in the acts and intents of His Heart.

We can then vigorously participate in the carrying of the one, glorious, redemptive Cross,
redeeming the world with Christ Jesus by the gift of our lives poured out in love.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi