**19 Pentecost**

**October 4, 2015**

**In the name of the God of all Creation,**

**The God alive in us as God was alive in Jesus,**

**And the poser of God known in the Spirit.**

**Amen**

Wow! This week we begin a four week series of readings from the Book of Job. Remember, Job is a man who has everything … wealth, power, health, family … and lost it all in a bet between God and Satan. But this morning is about Nathan’s baptism … so I guess I won’t talk about Job this week.

Then our reading from the Gospel of Mark begins with “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” But this morning is about Nathan’s baptism … so I guess I won’t be talking about divorce this week.

However, lo and behold, Mark’s Gospel also contains the story of Jesus picking up children, laying his hands on them, and blessing them. YES! Something I can hang my hat on. This morning is about Nathan’s baptism. What better than to hear about Jesus blessing children!

So, I will keep this short. Baptism is a sacrament, and the Catechism of the Church defines a “sacrament” as “the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” What we are doing this morning is making visible and public that which is already a reality. We are including Nathan as one of God’s beloved children … a reality that already exists. Nathan may not consciously know this … yet. But he will. When John and Melissa, Nathan’s parents, and Jody and Michelle, Nathan’s godparents, stand up here and name Nathan they also make promised to guide him in his faith journey.

Children … and adults … learn different things at different ages, in different ways. So this is more than just giving Nathan a book to read and asking if he understands. But I believe Nathan is in good hands … I’ve seen those hands at work in guiding Nathan’s brother Daniel in his faith journey.

Now, as most of you know, I invite everyone worshipping with us on a Sunday morning to share in the bread and wine at our communion. This is holy food for holy people. As far as I am concerned it is not my place to deny this holy food to anyone who seeks to be fed spiritually in our midst. The Church says that the bread and wine are only for those who are baptized Christians, but I think that is putting the cart before the horse. The way the Church uses baptism it defines who is “in” and who is “out.” But in God’s eyes I believe that we are all “in.” Why not invite people to share out spiritual meal, to be fed with others of our community, and if it leads to that “outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” then that is wonderful. But even that doesn’t have to happen for us to share God’s love by feeding us in all the ways we may be fed.

Anyhow, I also believe that teaching children about Holy Communion and the bread and the wine is an experiential exercise, not an intellectual one. I think it is safe to say that not one of us adults, regardless of how sophisticated we may be in all the nuances of what Holy Communion really is, could give a full and extensive definition of what happens to those wafers and wine that makes them the holy food that they become by the time we eat a tidbit of this rather odd bread, and drink a sip of this rather sweet wine. It is a mystery! It is intended to be a mystery, and it is a holy and sacred mystery for all regardless of their intellectual understanding of what is happening.

That is why I’m willing to give the bread and wine to even the youngest when they come to the rail and hold out their hand. When they see their parents getting some of the bread, and they hold out their hand to have a piece also … as they stand or kneel in the unusual place with a man or woman dressed in a special costume … that is when they are ready to experientially participate and learn about being fed at church.

And that is exactly what has happened for Daniel, and it is exactly what is going to happen for Nathan. When Daniel came with John and Melissa to the communion rail, and held out his hand like his parents were doing, he received a morsel of the communion wafer, and he ate it … at least that time he did. And a few weeks after that, I was standing at the altar as the two lines of people were formed to come to the communion rail, and I looked out and there was Daniel, right in the middle, with his hands folded in front of him, ready to get his holy food. If only I had had a camera. But the image is firmly imbedded in my mind.

With training like that, by parents and godparents like this, I know that Nathan will be guided along in his faith journey … just as Daniel is being guided.

So, I say it is time to get on with it. If the parents and godparents … and Daniel … will come forward as the choir sings an anthem we will proceed to baptize Nathan.

Amen.