

Taking the Plunge Easter Vigil March 31, 2018 8:00 PM (April 1, 2018)
Gn 1:1-2:2; Ex 14:15-15:1; Is 55:1-11; Ez36:16-17a, 18-28; **Rom 6:3-11**;
Mk 16:1-7 (So a lack of conviction and a lack of motivation is not something to lament, but what is something to lament is inner emptiness and aimlessness.)

Today we read so many readings, but the one that stands out for me is the Letter to the Romans. **“Do you not realize that we have been baptized into the death of Christ?”**

This reminds me of when I was a child; my parents decided it would be a good idea for my brother and me to receive **swim lessons**. Now no matter what the politicians tell you, in the 1950s June mornings were cold. So there we were freezing to death at a pool, Sunset Pool in Glen Ellyn. The instructor said, “Now the first thing we are going to do is jump into the water.” My brother and I rarely agreed on anything, but we agreed that was a bad idea. So the instructor said, “Well here, I’ll help. Grab my hands; we will go all together.” So the three of us went in. Okay, that wasn’t so bad. Then he said, “Let’s do it again.” So we did it again. That wasn’t so bad. The third time he let go and **we jumped in ourselves, plunging into the water**.

Well St. Paul is talking about a similar idea of plunging, not into water, but into life. He is using this **plunging idea, Baptism, but he is saying being baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ**. The font, the water, that’s just an external sign of something else.

Now it’s rare to find someone actually plunging into the experience of Christ. We are like me at the edge of the pool. We would rather ease in when we are ready and not before. But **Christ and the new life, the offer, cannot be experienced in a safe, comfortable way. Being in Christ requires letting go of safety, comfort, and what is familiar, especially our familiar feelings of who we are**.

Saul learned about this on the road to Damascus. He found new life, a new identity, and a new name by being plunged into the experience of Christ. “Saul why do you persecute me?” came the voice. “Who are you, Lord?” “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,” **Jesus identifying with his own believers, the members of his body, because we are one with him**.

Now unlike Saul, most of us don’t have his momentum. After all he was on a tear toward Damascus. God just had to redirect him a little bit, turned out not to be so hard. We might feel it

unfortunate that we just don't have that momentum, but momentum isn't necessarily good either, because Paul's momentum drove him to hatred and anger and indignation and the willingness to persecute people, so **momentum is not always good**. Convictions are not always good. Faith is not always good. **So a lack of conviction and a lack of motivation is not something to lament, but what is something to lament is inner emptiness and aimlessness**, and we see that so much in our world today: emptiness and aimlessness.

Now if God could guide, protect, and support the early Church with its odd blend of characters, who were actually clueless, then **we should have confidence that God can guide, protect, and support us, even though we are also clueless**. But this is not something you should take anyone's word for. This is something each of us must **find out for ourselves. And we can, but only if we take the plunge of faith into the death and resurrection of Christ**. When Nathaniel was curious about Jesus' mission, Jesus told him, **"Come and see."** First come, then see; not see first and then decide whether we want to come, which is a game that many of us play.

The faith that St. Paul talks of is not simply a belief in the mind. It's a movement of the heart/will. And **true faith**, which is a gift from God [a theological virtue technically], **can only lead to hope and love**. And if there is any faith that doesn't lead to hope and love, it isn't really a gift from God. **True faith alone fills up the emptiness of the human heart and gives us direction and purpose**. The world we are living in now has **many different kinds of people with many different kinds of convictions and beliefs**, and some of these even weird ones are actually inspired by God. That's because God has created a lot of weird people, and he has to use weird means to get to them. **But faith that comes from God leads to God. But there are also people with all kinds of beliefs and convictions that lead away from God**, and they call that faith too. **And then there are still many people standing on the edge of the pool**.