

Lent 5B (3/29/09 – Christ – Cross – Baptism)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Christ – Cross – Baptism — in a sense, that’s almost all we need to know ... as long as we understand them all properly ... what they mean ... and what they mean for us in our Christian faith and life. **Christ – Cross – Baptism** — that is precisely what the disciples in our *Holy Gospel Lesson* for this **Fifth Sunday in Lent** did **not** understand.

Our *Gospel* text begins: ***And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.*** [MK 10.32] The Apostles and other disciples are amazed ... astounded ... **and** afraid – and they don’t know the half of it, yet. They are amazed and afraid because they know – as does Jesus – that the Jewish leaders are not at all keen on Him. In fact, they want to arrest Him ... and do Him harm. It wasn’t that long ago that they had tried to do something, but were unable ... and then began plotting how to kill Him – and Jesus had gone away from Jerusalem to proclaim the Gospel in the more distant regions of Galilee ... even into the pagan territories of Tyre and Sidon, and Caesarea Philippi. But now they are going up the road ... Jesus leading the way ... His face set like flint to go to Jerusalem. The disciples are amazed and afraid already – what will their reaction be when the Savior gives them the gory details of what awaits Him there?

And taking the twelve again, He began to tell them what was to happen to Him, saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles.” [10.32–33] Wow! Now they must really be afraid! But there’s more: ***“And they will mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him, and kill Him.”*** [10.34a] *Why are we going up to Jerusalem ... if that’s what awaits us ... awaits You, Lord?* And then Jesus adds: ***“And after three days He will rise.”*** So what is their reaction to this hard news ... and this ***after three days He will rise*** comment? Not at all what you would expect.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to Him and said to Him, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And they said to Him, “Grant us to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your glory.” [10.35-37] They say that fear and grieving make people think and do strange things – but this is more than strange ... and yet, it’s not, really. It’s like children scrambling for Mom’s goods when they know her end is near – *I want that ... Mom promised me this*. More accurately, it’s like power-grabbing politicians scrambling for the best position to be had when a vacuum is created by the sudden departure of one of

their own ... or trying to snatch up the positions of favor when one of their own climbs up the ladder of political power, glory, and fame – we’ve seen a lot of that recently.

Or, to use another analogy that is contemporary ... though around for a long time: it is like trying to be in the hub of a Ponzi scheme ... or at the top of the pyramid. The basic concept is one of **selfishness** – our age-old sin problem. **We** want to be the ones on top ... calling the shots ... **receiving** from others ... being **served** by others. **We** want power and authority and honor and glory. And in a sense – as I said in the beginning – it all has to do with understanding (or **not** understanding) *Christ – Cross – Baptism*. So let’s get to the meat of our *Gospel Lesson* ... the meat of the Gospel itself.

The disciples don’t rightly understand Christ – Who He is ... what it means that Jesus is the Christ. Peter declared it shortly before the *Transfiguration* (but didn’t fully understand) – Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the Living God* [MT 16.16]. Jesus is the Anointed One – that’s what *Christ* means in the Greek ... think of *chrism oil* (used for anointing). Jesus is the Messiah – the Hebrew word for Anointed One. Think of the priests and the prophets and the kings of the Old Testament – they were **all** anointed with oil ... chrismated. They were the types – the lesser analogies of the true and greater Christ. For Jesus is Prophet – Priest – King ... all rolled up into One. And not just **any** prophet – but the Prophet Who speaks God’s Word perfectly ... since He **is** the Word of God incarnate. Not just **any** priest – but the One *designated by God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek* [HEB 5.10] ... an eternal High Priest ... *neither having beginning nor end of life* the author of Hebrews says elsewhere in the *Epistle* [7.3] ... One Who offers **no** sacrifices for Himself (since He is completely **without** sin) ... but Who offers Himself **as** sacrifice ... once-for-all (since He Himself is also the Lamb of God Who without blemish). And He is not just **any** King – but the King of **all** kings and Lord of **all** lords.

But above all, Christ is the Anointed One – the Messiah – Who is anointed with the Holy Spirit above all men ... **and** “anointed” with the sins of the whole world. In this way – anointed with the Holy Spirit but having laid upon Him all our sins – He surpasses **all** those who have ever been anointed in service to God and men. For **as Christ** our Lord Jesus goes up to Jerusalem ... to His Cross – **as Christ** He is rejected and condemned to death ... handed over to sinners ... receives mocking, spitting, flogging and death for Jews and Gentiles alike ... for me and **for you**.

Jesus is *Christ* precisely so that He might go to the *Cross* and work your salvation. Jesus is *Christ for you* ... for the forgiveness of all your sins!

Which brings us to the right understanding of the *Cross*. The text doesn’t

mention the Cross in particular – it only refers to Jesus being handed over to the Gentiles. But that’s how the Gentiles – the Romans who occupied Jerusalem and all the lands of Israel and much of the known world – put to death those who were thus condemned. They put people to death by means of the cross – cruelly ... horribly. And our Lord’s death by crucifixion – His death on the **Cross** – **was** ... and **is** actually ... Jesus’ glory. To be sure, our Lord Jesus Christ has another glory. But His **first** glory is to die the death of the **Cross** to reconcile the whole world of sinners to the Father. James and John – and the world in general ... even we quite often – don’t rightly understand that. *Grant us to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your glory.* [10.37] *Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”* [10.38] Christ says Himself in these words – though not so directly – that His **Cross** is His glory. The **Cross** is His **cup** – the drinking of the dregs of the wrath of the Father poured out against the sin of the world (which is upon Him ... which He has been made). The **Cross** is His **baptism** ... by holy fire, as it were, as a sacrifice of atonement upon the altar of the **Cross** – not physical fire (like we normally think of) ... but blistering wrath fire ... the burning in the joints from hanging on the **Cross** ... the searing pain of nail pierced hands and feet ... the excruciating agony of splintery wood scraping against an already torn-open back with every breath ... but above all, the forsakenness when the Father burns the sacrifice with His holy and righteous anger against the sin He cannot countenance. All poured out upon the Son ... Jesus the **Christ**.

And **Christ** calls His suffering and death on the **Cross** His **Baptism** – for **Baptism** is to be a washing ... and by the shedding of His Blood Christ washes away the sins of the world; **Baptism** is a dying to sin ... and by His **Cross Christ** dies to and **for** the sins of the world; **Baptism** is a rising again to newness of life ... to live before God in righteousness and purity forever ... and after His **Cross** ... *after three days He will rise* to live eternally with the Father at His right hand.

Christ – Cross – Baptism — this applies to us ... to me and **to you**. The sons of Zebedee wrongly understood them. They thought of a different glory of the **Christ** – one other than the glory of His **Cross** ... the glory of giving Himself for the life of the world by His gory **Baptism** of crucifixion. To sit at Christ’s right and left hands in **that** glory was given to two thieves – one who would die in his sin ... the other who would be brought to repentance of sins and faith in the **Christ** Who forgives sins by His **Cross**.

But you, dear Christian, partake of **Christ** and His **Cross** – the benefits of Christ’s glory – first through your **Baptism**. For in your **Baptism** you were crucified with **Christ** [ROM 6] ... baptized into His death by the **Cross**. Buried

with *Christ* through *Baptism*, you have died to sin – even as He died for your sin. And even as He on the third day rose from the grave – so have you been raised through *Baptism* to new life in *Christ*. And anointed with the Holy Spirit in your *Baptism* – having received the Holy Spirit through the Word attached by God’s command and promise to the waters of Holy *Baptism* – you have the blessed promise that you will, indeed, enter into *Christ’s* eternal glory. The glory of His salvation – procured by His death on the *Cross* – is yours already now. And His everlasting glory shall be yours when you pass through death into that life which has no end. Then you shall drink the cup of God’s eternal pleasure – though for now you also drink the cup of suffering on this earth. And yet, even here, you partake of the heavenly Feast – as you receive your Lord Jesus the *Christ* and all the benefits His work on the *Cross* ... in the Cup of the Sacrament. Here, dear Christian, is not only the foretaste the eternal Feast to come ... here are all the blessings of *Christ – Cross – Baptism* — all for you ... all for your forgiveness ... all for your salvation and life ... both now and forever.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the + SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]