

Blessed be God who animates our lives and sanctifies with the grace of baptism that our lives may be lived in perfect freedom in Him who brings salvation to the world. AMEN

“Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs.

I am haunted by waters.” Norman McLean

I think of this quote often; I used it to construct my everchanging everflowing spiritual autobiography; I am reminded of it constantly as I approach and ponder the rivers and streams in this corner of God's creation, sometimes shallow and still; often full and rushing. I think of it when I pray about baptism and the necessity of living water. The restorative and redemptive power of baptism.

what is it about water? what is it about water be it lake or river or ocean or bathtub? what is it about water which causes people to gather, to rejoice, to ponder, to pray, to grieve? babies delight, adults are often soothed,

whatever it is water has come to be alongside bread and wine the most important sign of God's eternal love grace and compassion. We are washed in God's love; we swim in God's ocean of grace.

Water is very important to this family and these families gathered here today

Owen has already had swimming lessons; when I saw a picture of him submerged with arms and legs outstretched, with a look of/ what was it /not joy but peace on his face I thought about the wonder of water and the grace of freedom. I thought of God's delight.

Sarah his mother learned to walk beside the water; she took her first steps on the hard sand of a Delaware Beach in the summer of 1988! As sandpipers scurried and gentle tides touched her toes she raised her arms in glee and again I thought about wonder love and praise and I thought about freedom. where would she go now?

And since Jordan has joined our family I have had the immense joy of watching him quietly without warning climb in a canoe and paddle across Squam Lake with the faithful Nico perched or swimming alongside...Freedom and grace in motion

And no less the godparents:

Lauren came to our family schooled in water sports and navigation. The look on her face when we go to the ocean or lake each summer is pure delight as well and especially in her commitment to share the beauty of water with her daughters and now of course Owen!

I have not witnessed personally Evan's love of water but today I am wondering and dreaming of his young family's time at the Cape or in Maine and while too short, the impression made by Lindsay Owen's godangel and Evan as they spread the love of God's watery creation. I imagine they still do! And in God's time they always will be building sand castles with their children to heaven together.

Yes water is important to so many of us...its beauty, its mystery, its sanctity.

And water can become holy water when it is sanctified by intentional attitude of praise and thanksgiving. It becomes holy water when we pray over it, and bless it, and allow it to bless us.

Today, as we begin to emerge from the darkness of Advent, on the day after the darkest day as light slowly creeps back into our lives, and as we adjust to the Light coming into the world in the Incarnation, we pause to baptize with holy water and to remember.

John the Baptist has been ever present this Advent calling us to this baptism. Calling us to repent and to turn to God. We emerge at his beckoning to come around the font and welcome a new member into our fold and to take stock of our fold as we do so. Remember your own baptism as we create memories for Owen one day. May they be stories of water and mystery and freedom and peace. May they be punctuated with love and joy.

Holy Water and the Baptism of Owen Tucker Yarboro
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To gather for Owen's baptism today on the last Sunday of Advent is even more significant as we are still reeling from stories of the wild and wonderful John the Baptist who points us to a better way, THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. Because of the Incarnation which ironically we celebrate in three days the one to whom John pointed baptizes us not only with water but with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Water, oil, flame...they are the outward and visible signs of God's complete inclusion and reward of eternal life. And so are the faces of Love.

As many of you know I love poetry (my 2d grade teacher Mrs Cissel is laughing hysterically from the grave) and to date I have not done a baptism without reading this poem: Coming to Water
COMING TO WATER by Nicola Slee

COME TO water. It may be lake, river or sea.
It does not matter, so long as the source is clean.
Each makes its own kind of poultice for sickness.
Here you will find healing,
though it may not be in the form you are seeking.

You must build a necessary hunger before you get there.
You must be needy. You must be hurting.
You must be lonely as the seabird's cry
far out near the horizon.

After arriving, you must wait for a long while.
You will still be arriving.
Walk and walk and walk by the water's edge.
Sit for long stretches at a time
gazing out at its many surfaces.
Think of nothing.
Let time and the passages of daylight and darkness
pass over and under you.

If it is dry and the sun beats golden on you,
close your eyes and bask in the miracle of warmth.
If it rains, whether sweetly or fiercely,

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let your face be turned upwards to receive its blessing,
Your skin be covered in wetness.
If a storm should holler and range and shake the skies,
walk out in it, let your body be blasted
by an energy that knocks you sideways,
emptying your limbs of all resistance.

You must go to the water.
You must take what it offers.
You must yield what it asks of you.
You must submit to its tenderness.
You must leave when it is time, though it is never time for leaving.
You must walk away still thirsty,
with the sound of its pouring ringing in your ears.[1]

COMing to water not having arrived but in the process of arriving is met especially in this season by the coming of CHrist into the world. our desire is met by God's for us.

It is the partial answer to what is important about water; the complement to the answer is Jesus Christ. For in Baptism we are forever, forever, enfolded and incorporated into the Body of Christ, the heart and lungs and limbs of God. We are sealed as Christ's own Forever...forever.

I invite you to look for signs of freedom on not just Owen's and the family and godparents faces but also on each others'. i invite you to remember your own baptism. I invite you to remember the glimpses of freedom and unconditional love which you may have experienced, albeit too infrequently. I invite you to get wet, to come to water, to feel it pulsing in your veins, dripping gently on your forehead, because that is the hope the joy the peace and the love which Advent points us toward. That is Christ who came and will come again. And today may this water's importance signify the Living CHrist who is and ever shall be abiding with us, indwelling us, causing our hearts to soar, our arms to rise in praise, our feet to journey on the shoreline, our paddles to move the water. May we all like Owen know

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the peace which passes understanding as we have been and ever shall be
submerged in the watery flow of God's grace.