

The baptism of the Lord

This is still the beginning of a new year in the sense that we added 1 to the number 2019, and so we now count 2020. Should a new year only be about a new number? If yes, then why don't we just call this year as 'another year' saying every year to each other 'Have a Happy 'another' year'? I think a new year should be a truly NEW year. To me the word 'new' is about quality and not quantity. When a car is new, its price is also higher, because its quality is better than the quality of the older version of the same car.

So when I think of this year as a new year, I focus on how much God loves me and on the quality of my love for God, so that I can love others as God loves them. Otherwise a new year will simply mean that I am one year further away from Jesus' time, and even from Jesus himself, because you either renew your relationship with Him and get closer to Him and fellow human beings or your relationship with Jesus regresses. When it comes to Jesus there is no stagnation. God says in the book of Revelation: 'because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth' (Rev 3:16).

To me renewing my relationship with God means constant transformation inside myself by way of humbling myself before Him and renewing my commitment to Him, seeking to hear Him, to follow His message out of love, trying to get closer to God our Father in Jesus and the Holy Spirit, so that I can love Him more and more and fellow human beings. So definitely I don't want think this is a new year, just because it not 2019, but 2020. I don't want this just to be about a number. Without inner transformation and the renewal of my relationship with God this is not really a new year to me, but just another year.

We heard about Jesus' baptism through the Gospel reading. It is renewal what Jesus' baptism is all about; He shows an example of how to begin or renew our relationship with the Father through the Spirit. By submitting himself to John's baptism Jesus tells us that for a renewal of our relationship with the Father we should repent our sins, which is what we is expressed through baptism, receive God's forgiveness which is offered through baptism, renounce Satan, which is the precondition of baptism, and accept that you are the child of the heavenly Father who declares it from the clouds: 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on Him.' I love these words of the Father, because I know He tells me also these words, because I am in His beloved Son through my baptism, so I am also His beloved child. I am not merely His child whom He loves, but His beloved

child, a dearly loved child. This is our true identity, and you need to know this when you renew your commitment to Him. Repentance, receiving forgiveness, renouncing Satan, casting out evil and knowing your true identity as the Father's beloved child, are also the 5 keys of freedom which we looked at in October last year at the Unbound conference.

This year I started my renewal first of all by fasting in a Biblical way, and looking at a Biblical resource on how to use my time, talent and treasure more effectively for the glory of God. The three T's: time, talent and treasure; because I don't just want to share my tea with you, after Mass in the hall, but I also want to share my other three T's as well, in the way the Bible teaches it and the Holy Spirit. And I hope that you will also share your three T's: time, talent and treasure more generously than ever before, because God blesses those who give cheerfully!

So as this new year begins let us make it new by renewing our commitment to our baptismal life, and by putting it into practice in a more radical way than ever before.

So now we will renew our baptismal commitment.