

Spiritual Reflection † April 22, 2023 Ultreya

Deacon Bob Rodriguez, Cursillo 52, St. Joseph's table

This morning... I would like to begin by sharing with you some of what a lady called Doris wrote about her life. It's in the book called "Healing Through the Mass" (pages 24-25) by Robert DeGrandis.

Doris tells us:

"My father abandoned his wife and four children when I was young. I never saw him and never heard from him, and until I was 18. I believed he was dead. When Aunt Emma, my father's sister, told me he was alive, I was astonished. I gave her my graduation picture to give to him, and hoped he would contact me.

He never did.

Later, when I committed my life to Jesus, I developed a relationship with Him and knew His love. Yet I was afraid of God the Father. Knowing Him as a tender and loving Father seemed impossible.

One day I learned that my father had died.

My deepest prayer to meet him would not be fulfilled. I felt enormous hurt and visited Aunt Emma. She told me a little about his life and death, and said he decided not to see me because he was too ashamed of his behavior as a young father. He must have known, through her, that for 17 years I had asked about him.

I stood near his grave engulfed in anguish...My search was over. This was as close as I would ever get to my father.

I cried out to God, 'It's too late, too late! I have no father!' At that point I heard a voice say..." I am your Father.' I turned around but no one was there. Again, I heard the words, this time softer. 'I am your Father.'

It was hard to believe at first, but the God I had feared spoke to me. I felt His love surround me. Because God revealed Himself to me as Father, I no longer feel the hurt of an abandoned child, nor the pain from my fruitless search. I was healed so that only the memory and none of the pain remains.

That afternoon in the lonely cemetery changed my life where God was once only a remote figure of the Trinity...He is now the Father I talk with, walk with, and praise each day.

I realize this wonderful Father loves all His children so much that He impatiently awaits the day that He can draw us close to Himself forever."

Just as our heavenly Father spoke to Doris, our Father also spoke on the day Jesus was baptized... "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on him." Because we are baptized, we are beloved sons and daughters of God.

Just as the Father said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on him" when Jesus was baptized, the Father said over us when we were baptized... "This is my beloved son; this is my beloved daughter."

On the day we were baptized we were changed forever.

Imagine, you became a son or daughter of God on the day you were baptized, enjoying a new relationship with our Father.

It was because of her baptism that Doris benefited from this beautiful relationship with her heavenly Father.

We don't think enough about our own baptism, this most important event in our lives.

If we reflected more on who we are because of baptism how different we would be...how differently we would live?

God uses water, the very basis of life to remind us of the life we can have with him...a life we were called to be.

Water gives life; and as we have seen in parts of our country...water can destroy life.

We saw water shut down parts of Fort Lauderdale.

Like Water...we in our own lives have the opportunity to bless others or to destroy...

Walking into this holy place or in our parishes each week... we bless ourselves...we remind ourselves of our baptismal commitment... and we clean ourselves as we stand before the Almighty God.

And sometimes we take this ritual for granted...like all of us with so many things in life to deal with.

Being baptized as children... or whenever it happened would make no sense and have no meaning if we grew up in faith and didn't put our baptism into effect...if we didn't live like people who have been baptized into the Catholic Church.

Our baptism would be nonsense if we did not decide for ourselves that the decision made for us by our parents was in fact what we ourselves also wanted for ourselves.

There is one occasion above all others during the year when we proclaim that what our parents did for us was what we also wanted, that is during the Easter Vigil when we renew our baptismal vows.

This morning is a sort of an Easter Vigil.... this morning we are going to recommit ourselves.

We'll use the waters of baptism, and we'll touch the Word of God

As we dip our fingers in the bowl and feel the water on our forehead let us remember that our own baptism was not just a magic formula recited over us by the priest or deacon to wash off original sin and give us a chance of getting to heaven.

It was an invitation into a new life.

We were born again.... into a new world where God's love can influence our lives.

The Baptism we received is like Ordination and Marriage, it is something to be lived every day.

When we were baptized it is as if the Father said over us as he said over Jesus, "This is my beloved son, this is my beloved daughter."

In our story at the beginning of this talk, Doris was privileged to experience this in a dramatic way.

The rest of us live every day knowing God is our Father and we are his sons and daughters since we were baptized.

Today you might think that your own baptism was a long time ago and not "real" to you today. The truth is, what happened to you while you were younger had an effect on the rest of your life.

Have you thought about your Baptism lately?

God indeed call you "my beloved child". The question today is, how do we respond to those blessings and gifts of love?

This morning we will have a ritual blessing of water and words.

Each of you will have the opportunity to place your fingers in Holy Water...Bless yourselves with the sign of the cross...then place your hands on the Word of God....

I ask you to silently say words to God committing yourself to living out your baptism...

May God Bless You!