

**“Baptism of Our Lord” - Rev. Jennifer Adams**  
**January 3, 2010 – Christmas 2C**

I'm just back from ten wonderful days of floating in the warm waters of a very warm sea very, very far south of here. And I know that's a dangerous opening line when you're speaking to people who have spent the last ten days layering up and digging out and freezing through and hoping for one, just one glimpse of the sun. But I'm also feeling pretty safe that you won't throw things at me up here if I go on with the line of thought. We're in a sanctuary for heaven's sake and besides, I promise that all of this really does have something to do with the gospel.

So back to the water. I'm not by nature a floater perhaps you can tell. I'm a swimmer, jumper, diver, treader. I like slides and tubes and water skiis. Things that move. And the great thing about water is that you can do all of those things in it too. You can play in it and race in it and have all kinds of fun in motion in water. But one of the very first things they teach children in swimming classes is how to float. One of the very first things they teach kids is the amazing truth that the water can hold us. All of us. Water can actually support our bodies no matter what our bodies look like, or are shaped like which I think is an amazing thing. Now some of us float more easily than others but we can all do it. So lesson number one: The water will hold us.

Lesson number two is that the water can be dangerous. There are risks involved in entering into the sea, or the lake or the pool. I watched one less than wise adult, jump full out into a wave, get turned in a complete summersault and in a matter of about three seconds was dumped out flat on his back on the beach. And he was lucky. We know stories of floods and drownings. We hear stories of mistakes made and accidents that happen in water. The water can hold us but the water needs to be honored and respected because it has a power that we can't control. It has the power to shape reshape the land, to flip us around, to tear down even while it holds up.

Lesson number three is that there is a lot of life out there in the sea that we can't see with an initial glance at the surface. There is life out there and it's beautiful and while in some ways that life is completely unlike us, it is with us as creation. There are creatures out there with no legs, some with eight legs, others with clawed legs, no feet, webbed feet, big teeth, and no teeth; there are creatures that look like nothing more than clear floating bubbles and those in all their dainty clearness make me nervous; there are blue creatures, yellow creatures, grey, green, spotted, striped, slimy, prickly, and shell covered creatures- all types of creatures, living down there in the water. So while I was out there floating or swimming or bobbing on the waves they were with me, or better put, I was with them. The waters contain a diversity of life, all made by God as the wonder that is Creation. So the water will hold us, it needs to be respected, and we're not in this alone.

There's more too – very basically, the water is what we need to be alive. It sustains us in a foundational, essential way and water cleanses us inside and out even as it gives us life. So it's no wonder that water was chosen as the symbol to be the symbol of our beginning in faith; water is that through which we are brought into the Body through baptism. So it's foundational in here too. Life giving and new life giving. And the same lessons apply that apply to the sea. The waters of baptism will hold us, these waters will miraculously hold us through all things of life,

regardless of our shape or size or ability to swim: through our birthings and growings and losses and learnings, even in our lost times when we can't touch the water is holding us, promising life.

And occasionally the waters of baptism turn us upside down, sometimes for our own good, sometimes because we haven't respected the depths, the mystery the power that is this water. This water too has power – power to shape the landscape to tear down what needs to be torn down even while it sustains. We also play in this water, we sing and praise and pass the peace here. And just as important as it is in the sea - there are other creatures in this with us. Some very different than us- some with shells, some with prickles, some very clear and bubbly - there is an amazing diversity held within the waters of baptism, and we celebrate the wonder of each and every one being a beloved part of God's creation..

And so the good news this morning is that you don't have to go south to float. You don't have to leave these parts to splash around and play. You don't have to be away to see the diversity of life that God has created. You don't have to leave to be alive, fully alive in the waters. Because they run through this place all the time. Holding us. Challenging us. Teaching us. Expanding us. Shaping us. Giving us life and new life over and over again.

It's good to be back. As always it's good to be floating with all of you.

Amen.