

Right now Dana and I are on vacation but I wanted to touch base with you anyway about some important issues.

The season after Epiphany (January 6) leads us to see the revelation of Christ in numerous ways—in his baptism, his miracles, the calling of the disciples, and his glorious manifestation on the Mount of Transfiguration. This all leads us to seek after and yearn for the revelation of Christ in our own lives on a daily basis. How can Christ reveal himself to you?

The more I thought about my sermon on January 13 I realized I may need to clarify a few items and then discussion with others confirmed that. So, allow me to refresh your memory. That Sunday the text was 1 Corinthians 12.1-11, but I started in Ephesians 4 describing the Church as a team where each member contributed to the health and mission of the church *until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.* This happens as each member plays their role and strengthens his/her fellow members. V.16 sums this up well, ¹⁶ *He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is **healthy** and **growing** and **full of love.***

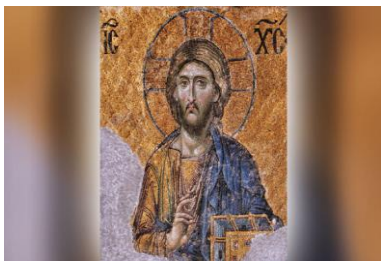
Then we went to 1 Cor. 12 to see how each member knows what role to play. I'm going to quote a book I'm presently reading it will be more succinct than I:

The Apostle Paul goes to great lengths in his letters to communicate that accomplishing the mission of God is a team sport. Together, every congregation is the physical body of Christ on earth; individually, every person is an integral member of this body (1 Cor. 12.27). In his infinite wisdom, the Holy Spirit has granted each person a unique gift and purpose within the congregation and for its common good (1 Cor.12,7). A healthy church is one in which the body is strengthened and built up because every member serving his brothers and sisters and their broader community through his or her gifts (Eph. 4.12).

I then said that there were, outside of water baptism, two other baptisms in Scripture. "Baptism" in these refers to an overwhelming experience. They are Jesus' baptism and the Holy Spirit's baptism. John the Baptist prophesied that although he baptized people in water Jesus would baptize

believers into the Holy Spirit. And 1 Cor 12 tells us that the Holy Spirit baptizes the lost into the Body of Christ. Jesus baptism into the Holy Spirit is for power to witness and for sanctification. The Holy Spirit's baptism is for conversion. I then closed the sermon with an illustration from my ministry years ago. The church I served needed another deacon to serve on the Board (much like our Vestry) I asked a man named Steve to consider allowing his name to be put up for this position. His response was "Doesn't our Bylaws say that deacon must be baptized in the Holy Spirit?" I said, "Yes it does." In that tradition one was known to be baptized in the Holy Spirit by the fact that they had spoken in tongues and since Steve had not yet had that experience he declined. This is the point where I want to bring clarity. This doctrine was one which I could not fully subscribe to in my former tradition. Let me be clear—***I do not believe one must speak in tongues to be baptized in the Holy Spirit or to be involved in any other ministry in the church, except possibly the clergy. There is not a 2-tiered level of Christians: one level being spiritual because they speak in tongues and one not so spiritual because they do not speak in tongues.*** Although speaking in tongues is a legitimate gift the Holy Spirit gives to believers and a gift that all believers can enjoy.

I trust that Bishop Beckwith's ministry on this past Sunday was effective and fruitful in the life of the parish. He has been such a blessing to our parish and to individual believers in the parish. We thank God for him.



CATECHISM CLASS BEGINS FEBRUARY 13. SIGN UP IN THE PARISH HALL