

Sunday, January 11th, 2009
Baptism of our Lord

Author Will Willimon likes to do just what many of us are doing today: recalling Jesus' baptism while remembering our own. Willimon wrote a book about baptism called *Remember Who You Are*. It traces our sense of vocation in Christ to its watery, baptismal source.

The problem is that most of us probably don't actually remember our baptism. Most of us were probably baptized as infants and have nothing personally to recollect of the day. And yet the liturgy doesn't leave us in utter forgetfulness. It reminds us with poured pitchers, splashing water, lavished oil, and flickering candles: in Christ we are cleansed, we are drowned and reborn, we are made a royal priesthood, and a light to the world. Although we were only gurgling, crying, cooing babies when we received that identity in Christ's baptism and could do nothing to earn it, we were given it as a gift and called to live it out as a gracious vocation.

Willimon likens it to what his mother would say to him at home when he was a teenager headed out the door on a Friday night. "Don't forget who you are," she'd call out, "Don't forget who you are." Baptism speaks a similar profundity to all of us. We were given an identity that graciously reminds us who we are and this identity becomes our way of life, our vocation. We remember not because we can recollect it, but because it is that gracious identity that grounds us and sends us out to live that calling. Baptism reminds us: we have a vocation not by dint of effort but by grace alone. To remember our baptism is to *remember who we are*: a people with a gracious baptismal identity and an equally gracious vocation to live out in the world.

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