

## *Our own baptism puts us always on safari doing good.*

The Masai of Kenya and Tanzania have a creed that reflects the essential teaching of St. Peter's speech in Caesarea, narrated in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 10. The Masai worldview is different, but the Christology is the same. Their creed reads: "We believe that God made good God's promise by sending God's son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and humanity, showing that the meaning of religion is love."

Our own baptism calls us to be "always on safari doing good," as the Masai had it, and "preaching peace," as St. Peter puts it. When Peter addresses the crowd in the reading from Acts 10, he presents Jesus as a model for new converts by showing that Jesus was a doer – he "went about doing good" – and no less is expected of his followers – you and me.

St. Mark's gospel, chapter 1, then speaks of the baptism of Jesus. This was not only a purification ritual: it was also a rite of commission. Upon his baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan, Jesus embarked on his public ministry. As Jesus was baptized, so were we baptized, not only in water, but "baptized in the Spirit." This means we are empowered to do what Jesus did: to be ever on safari doing good.

But the good we do is not just of our choosing... God gives the strength to do what needs to be done – graciously, gently, over time, calling and revealing to us the gifts we employ for the good of the world we touch. Most of us understand that the Church has a mission, but not ourselves, personally. We see baptism as a "christening," but not as commissioning us to perform a ministry. We experience union with Jesus in Holy Communion, but are not inclined to experience union with him in being delegated by him to carry on his work. Religion, for most of us, remains "private"; we perceive ourselves as members of a church, rather than servants – doers – on safari – for a cause.

In truth we are baptized for a cause. Baptism commissions us to do the work of Jesus according to our capabilities. We're not asked to go beyond our strength, but to use the strength we have and in the

way we can. In our own right it is our duty to teach, counsel, admonish, heal, forgive, comfort, feed the hungry, be a light to those in darkness, whenever other people need such services and we are in a position to offer them. Not a day goes by that we don't take note of people who need a helping hand, a kind word, a touch of sympathy, a piece of advice, a warning, a sign of peace, light on a problem, a prayer, an answer to a pressing question. These are opportunities of grace for each of us to perform acts of ministry. It all flows from our baptism which puts us on safari doing good.

Our journey to this table lets us become what we receive, empowered by the glorified flesh and blood of Jesus – united in the Spirit to touch the world as Jesus does because we become Christ to the world. St. Teresa of Avila lived from 1515 to 1582 and was a Spanish nun and mystical writer who founded the Reformed Order of Carmelites, in 1562. Her works include *The Way of Perfection*, published after her death. St. Teresa once made a statement that has strongly influenced many people ever since: “Christ has no body on earth but yours, no feet but yours, yours are the eyes through which Christ touches the world. Yours are the hands with which He blesses.”

Let us pray for a moment and invite the Spirit of God to enter our hearts: Ever creative Father, send forth your Spirit into each of us; make our bodies into your body, our feet your feet, our eyes your eyes, our hands the touch which heals and makes gentle and gives life...we ask this through Christ our Lord.

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