

Proper 6a: 6/18/17
The Rev. Dee Anne Dodd
St. Paul's, Wallingford CT

As anyone lucky enough to be here last week knows, we celebrated the absolutely wonderful baptism of little Samuel Golschneider that went off without a hitch. Meanwhile, a colleague of mine in another church was officiating at a baptism too. Except . . . during theirs the fire alarm went off!

Naturally everyone there was startled but managed to make it out safely. While the fire department was checking out the building, the congregation gathered outside, God bless'em, and went ahead with the baptism.

Now it turns out that it was a technical glitch of the alarm system. But I don't want to call it a *false* alarm. Because when you think about it, it's the *truest* expression of what baptism is all about: A call to action, a public witness for all to see, a sounding alarm that moves us out into the world to live our baptismal vows.

After all, what was John the Baptist himself but a "voice *crying out* in the wilderness"?

So shouldn't we feel the urgency of every promise in our baptismal covenant?
To know ourselves encircled by each member of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
To continue gathering to learn from and support one another in prayer?
To resist evil and ask forgiveness when we fall short?
To proclaim Jesus in everything we say and do?
To see Jesus in all persons, including ourselves?
To strive for peace and justice, respecting all of creation as a gift of God?

These are the promises of baptism.
Look around the world, my friends,
is it not an emergency that we live up to them?
I wonder if we should rig our alarm system to go off during the next baptism –
to show us the urgency of the vows we make and
propel us out into the world to put them into action.

We'll see what we can come up with between now and then,
but for today we have a powerful gospel reading that serves the same purpose.
Jesus is sending out the disciples –
strengthening them as a community,
assuring them that they can proclaim the good news in his name.
They can heal and cleanse and bring new life to the world.
They can live lives of compassion because Jesus has done it first.
Jesus has shown the way. Jesus is with them still.

Today we recognize folks moving onto different stages of life,
our graduates and musicians completing another year of service.
(It's also a day to recognize the Father's among us.)
We not only celebrate the milestones achieved,
but commission them for what comes next.
And whatever it is,
here's something that awaits them all:
*The urgency of being sent out into the world by Jesus
to be Jesus' love and goodness in the world.*

Can you hear the sirens wailing?
Do you realize it's an emergency,
what this world desperately needs to see and hear --
from *you*?

And not just from our grads and musicians here today,
but from each of us, every day.

You're probably aware that there was a very real fire in London this week,
killing at least 58 people in a residential sky rise, the Grenfell Tower.

One of the moments emerging out of the chaos was of a baby
(not much older than last week's baptizee, I'm guessing)
who was wrapped in a heavy blanket by his desperate mother and
thrown from a burning window.
And caught – yes, safely caught –
by a stranger on the streets of London nine or ten floors below.

Don't we all wish for more stories like this?
Today's gospel of Jesus sending us forth,
and our baptismal promises to live as Jesus in the world,
sound the alarm for us to create such stories.

Sometimes we might be called to be the person
who risks taking desperate measures to help others.
Or sometimes we might be the one who takes a chance
to reach out our arms to help.
Our attempts may not always have happy endings.
But we're here to try, to be faithful, just the same.
To trust that wherever we are,
Jesus is there too and he has something helpful,
something important,
something urgent for us to do for and with him.

Wherever we find ourselves,
however young or old or in whatever stage of this life,
Jesus needs us to *live* his compassion as if it were an emergency –
because it is.

It is.

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