

January 11, 2015 – Baptism of the Lord
Emmanuel: Yesterday – Today - Tomorrow

When you entered church today you received a card with the outline of today's homily: Emmanuel: Yesterday - Today - Tomorrow.

Emmanuel means "God is with us" and we will be exploring that great truth - in the past, today and in the future.

Here on this last day of the Christmas season we are in the midst of a transition, actually, several transitions.

We are changing colors of the liturgical year from white to green.

We are changing from our emphasis of Jesus as a baby to Jesus as an adult today as we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus.

We are also celebrating the Baptisms of three infants at our 11:00 Mass, changing them into members of the Body of Christ.

To explore "Emmanuel: Yesterday" we have today's four marvelous Scripture readings.

If you possibly came to church today feeling sad, bummed out, depressed or even anxious then today's readings are a sure remedy.

In today's first reading from the prophet Isaiah we hear Isaiah giving joyous and encouraging words to the Jewish people who were exiled in Babylon.

"Thus says the Lord:

All you who are thirsty, come to the water!

You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat;

Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk!"

Hundreds of miles from home the Jews hear a promise of returning to their country, their own lands, the lands of the ancestors.

God was there ... Emmanuel!

In a similar fashion today's Psalm from Isaiah continues the joyous tone with words like:

"You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation".

The psalm continues with words of encouragement:

"God indeed is my savior;

I am confident and unafraid."

God was there ... Emmanuel!

Our second reading from the first letter of St. John continues using the word that occurs in all our readings today: water.

Here the context is *not* a joyous one:

"This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone but by water and blood."

Yes, we know that Jesus was baptized in water but

here John is reminding us of the marvelous actions by Jesus for us, dying on the cross and rising from the dead!

God was there ... Emmanuel!

The Gospel of Mark tells us the story of the day Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist.

John was offering a baptism of repentance to the people waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

And, now, here is the Messiah!

"On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him (Jesus).

And a voice came from the heavens,

'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

God was **there** ... Emmanuel!

That was yesterday, hundreds of years ago, in the Bible times.

What can we say about God being present with us today?

We can so readily answer "Yes, God is with us in so many ways!"
 God is here, present in our worshipping community.
 God is here, present in the Word of God which we just heard.
 God is here, present in the Eucharist, in the bread and wine,
 in the ***Body of Christ*** and the ***Blood of Christ***.
 God is here, in each of us.

Truly, today ***God is here ... Emmanuel!***

And, what about tomorrow?

As I think of that question I think particularly of the three infants being
 Baptized.

What do we do ... what do the parents do ... so that *tomorrow* God will
 be there ... Emmanuel?

Oh, yes, God will be there!!!!

BUT ... Will we recognize God; will we honor God; relate with God?

For both us and the parents I think we can recommend three things:

First, pray.

Pray by ourselves but especially in the presence of the children and, as
 the children grow a bit, pray **with** the children.

Prayer at meals; prayer at the sad and joyous times of life; prayer at
 the beginnings and ends of the days.

Sunday Mass; every Sunday; rain or shine; cold or hot (we now have air
 conditioning!).

Second, read and study about the Lord.

Bible reading.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for young children to learn about
 and experience the presence of God.

Sacramental preparation for the children ... for First Communion, for
 First Reconciliation, for Confirmation.

Generations of Faith a time for all ages to grow and reflect.

Thirdly, the hallmark of Emmanuel, service.

The service may be within the family ... taking care of someone who is sick;

The service may be here within our parish community ... helping the packing and distributing of food at Thanksgiving or Christmas

The service may be outreach to the neighborhood ... like helping with one of our park clean up efforts.

The service may be to the world ... the environment, world peace.

Yes: prayer, study and service!

Then **we will see** that tomorrow, God is with us ... Emmanuel!

Emmanuel ... yesterday, today and tomorrow!