

Epiphany 1, Baptism of Our Lord  
St. Paul's/Resurrección, Mount Vernon, WA  
Parish Meeting Day

January 7, 2024  
Rev. Paul Moore

## Foundations

May the Rt. Rev. Bob Hibbs rest in eternal peace and rise in glory everlasting. He was a friend of mine as well as my Bishop Suffragan in another diocese. He spoke Spanish, had lived extensively overseas, and we understood one another. Most of all, he had a huge heart.

One day I was in his office at the diocesan center. He showed me a frame he had hung on the wall. At the top of the space was his big and elaborate Certificate of Consecration as bishop. Below that were his ordination certificates to the priesthood and diaconate. Below that was his Certificate of Confirmation, and at the bottom of the stack, smaller than all the rest and really lacking much of anything to catch the eye, was his Baptismal Certificate.

Bob told me with great humility why he had arranged them that way. It wasn't that his consecration as bishop was most important and therefore at the top. His baptism was most important, the foundation upon which all his ministry was built. His baptism was the foundation for his confirmation, diaconate and his ministry as deacon and priest. Now as a bishop, he saw it as the inspiring document for this new and wider ministry.

Today we gather for our annual Congregational Meeting. We will take a look at last year to see where the Spirit has led us. We will hold it up in our mind's eye beside what we understood to be the Spirit's leading: To strengthen the bases, to firm up the foundations. In many ways we have done exactly that. We have not launched much in the way of new ministries, but the ones we have, have more volunteers, more activity and more energy. Our attendance has crept up, and what delights me perhaps more than many things, is the number of children we see on Sunday mornings. (Spoiler alert! We need an organized, energetic and dedicated children's ministry team!)

If John has anything to say to us about all this it's just these two things. First, just like John paved the way for Jesus, so we pave the way for Jesus today, in our own midst, individually, and as a body, this part of the Body of Christ. As you attend to the Altar, as you sing in the choir, as you serve at the altar, as you take communion to the sick and shut-ins, as you give for our outreach ministries, as you handle brooms and buckets, you are paving the way for Jesus to show up—and he does, just as he promised, where two or three are gathered. All we have to do is be open to his presence, point to him as John did. This show is not about us, it's about him.

Second, as Jesus' ministry followed on the heels of his baptism, just as it was empowered

by that same Spirit we receive at our baptism, so our ministries are an extension of our baptism. Baptism is more than a moment. It is a beginning, a launching into a certain kind of life, the life Jesus showed us in his ministry, death and resurrection, a life infused with, inspired by, and dedicated to self-giving love.

In baptism we say, "I believe." "I believe" means "I commit." "I commit" means "I will act." And so, we live our communal life for the sake of the world, just like John and Jesus showed us.