

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

January 12, 2025
Rev. Paul Moore

Parish Meeting Sunday

Verbs

My father, a linguist, really liked cartoons in the paper because of the plays on words. He had his favorites, but Calvin and Hobbes, by Bill Watterson didn't get a lot of attention until the piece on January 25, 1993. Calvin and Hobbes are walking along in the winter snow and Calvin says, "I like to verb words."

Hobbes responds, "What?"

"I take nouns and adjectives and use them as verbs. Remember when 'access' was a thing? Now it's something you do."

In the final panel he says, "Verbing weirds language," to which Hobbes responds, [Maybe we can eventually make language a complete impediment to understanding.]

We have a lot of nouns in our religious tradition that need to be verbed. We already did it with the main one. We talk about love as a verb, something you do rather than have, and that's a start, but I think we need to add the word "baptized." Being baptized not as something you are as much as something you do. Especially, being a part of the community of the baptized is not a state but a mandate.

The message of John the Baptist really sets the stage for this way of talking. His preaching is so impactful that people wonder whether or not he is the Messiah. He responds, "I've told you how to live out the baptism I have performed, but I'm just preparing the way for someone who will take it to the next level. He will separate the wheat from the chaff."

Then Jesus is baptized, and the heavens open and the Spirit descends (remember, the Spirit is God active, God as a verb) and a voice from heaven says, "You are my son, the Beloved, and with you I am well pleased." Jesus has "done" what was needed, and it launches three years of doing. It's all about doing.

Today is Parish Meeting Sunday. Just as importantly, today we commission two people whom you elected to the Vestry, and two as delegates and one as alternate to Diocesan Convention in a special congregational election meeting last November. The ministries

of these people take their context from the Congregation, the community of the Baptized.

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It is a way of living out their baptismal covenants, but there is more.

Because they are elected to positions of leadership, they are commissioned to lead us live out our collective baptismal covenant. It is we who commit to the verb, "being-the-community-of-the-baptized." They lead us in that action.

So, what does it mean to "verb" being-the-community-of-the-baptized? First of all, these people are verbing **our** baptismal covenant by what they are committing to do. Then, when you get to the Parish Meeting after this service, you will receive a packet of material. In that packet you will find lists of teams of people who do things for this parish and beyond.

- Altar Guild,
- Carolyn's Guild,
- Music and Angels Aloft,
- Worship Council,
- Greeters,
- Participants in Healing,
- And a lot more.

These people are verbing our baptismal covenant.

As we move toward joining the two congregations, we recognize that we are all part of the Body of Christ through baptism, and we share one faith, one spiritual tradition, one building and one priest. We work together already on a number of things, and we have begun to have a sense of family together after all the intercultural events we shared over the last several months. Becoming one congregation with two ethnic centers "verbs" our baptismal covenant.

Finally, you "verb" your baptismal covenant every time you show up for services. As you cross the threshold into the church building you move from secular into Sacred Space. Sacred space is never static. We as a community never exit these doors the same way we entered. As we reaffirm, as we listen, speak and learn, as we open our hearts and our minds, the reality of what our baptismal covenant means gets woven driven deeper and deeper into our life as a community and our lives as individuals. We cannot leave the same—let us not live the same.

As we move into 2025, I trust we will see more re-verb-erations emerge. What might they be? The Spirit, God verbed in the world, knows. The question for each of you is, How are you verbing your baptismal covenant? How should you be?