

What a week it has been. I am sure that like me you were shocked and sickened by the scenes of people storming the Capitol and even more so by men who should know better inciting the crowds with inflammatory rhetoric. Whether this is the end of something or the beginning of something we can all agree that it is not the way we expect people to behave in this society. Over the past few years, the norms of our civil society have been attacked again and again by the country's leaders and the result is that they no longer serve to hold back the anger and violence which are endemic in human society. This is what happened to Jesus at the end of his human life – he became a victim of mob violence, their hatred whipped up by the Jewish leaders, he became a scapegoat for everything that was wrong in their lives under Roman occupation.

While I was watching events unfold on Wednesday my eye was caught by a banner on a fence – it said, “Jesus Saves.” Initially I was horrified, thinking that that had been put there by people in the crowd, claiming that they were in some way helping Jesus to bring salvation. But then I realized that I have no idea who put it there or when. It might just be a permanent fixture on that section of fencing and have nothing to do with the riot.

But to think that it has nothing to do with the riot is as incorrect as to think that it was a statement of the mob. Because Jesus does save, and Jesus' healing is available in every situation. Jesus the Christ came that we might have life, and not just us but the whole of creation. Jesus came to bring healing – to bring reconciliation between God and human.

And we see that reconciliation encapsulated in today's gospel reading. John was preaching repentance and offering baptism as a sign of repentance – as a sign that the individual was turning back to God. Jesus did not need to be baptized because he *was* God so turning back to God was totally redundant. But Jesus was also human, and in his decision to be baptized by John he was joining in the life of humanity.

We can perhaps see this as the moment when Jesus fully commits himself to his ministry. As a human he experienced physical and mental growth— like the rest of us he started as a wet, bloody baby. Maybe this is the moment, when he steps into the Jordan with John, when he completely accepts his role as fully human and yet fully God and that is why the other members of the Trinity show up – the Holy Spirit and the

sazzsxCreator – in that astonishing moment, humanity and the Trinity are one: Giving us a vision, just a glimpse of what God intends – that humanity shall live in joyful community with the Trinity.

In our baptism we die to sin and are raised with Christ but this does not make us separate from the rest of humanity – no, as disciples of Christ we are more committed to fully living out our humanity and the waters of baptism are a symbol that we are choosing the same life as Jesus lived – a life of service to God and neighbor even when it brings us into conflict with the authorities.

I am sure that many in that crowd on Wednesday believed that their conflict with the authorities was divinely inspired. And I am sure that God was there with each one of them, just as God was with each one of us watching and just as God is still here with each of us today. And God was and is with each one who stirred up this mob for their own ends. I do not believe that God calls us to violence but, when necessary, to non-violent protest on behalf of the gospel. And if we truly believed that the election was rigged, then I would expect us to take to the streets in protest.

Because our baptismal vows call us to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

Epiphany is the season of light, of revelation. Epiphany is the season when we glimpse the Trinity fully engaged with this world. Wednesday was Epiphany and the light was shone on the ways that discontented

humanity can be riled up. The light was shone on the way that the increasing inequalities in our society have created unrest. History shows us that the more income disparities and other inequity grow in a society the less stable it becomes.

This is a time of unrest, a time of struggle. Democracy was born in struggle. It is a paradox of humanity that in struggle the new is born. Just as in baptism the new is born and is raised up.

The question for us, people of God, is what new are we birthing?

Are we striving for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being or are we judging as idiots or losers those who have different ideological and political ideas from us? We do not need to agree with those who differ from us. We do not have to condone their behavior – evil is evil. But each one of “them” is as beloved of God as we are. Each one of “them” is a human being whose dignity we have promised to respect.

Jesus stepped into the river of humanity and in so doing brought heaven to earth. That is our reality. As followers of Jesus we are steeped in the river of humanity and yet we are in loving connection with the Trinity. What we do makes a difference. How we behave makes a difference. What we say on social media makes a difference. How we pray makes a difference.

Sometimes I wonder what we can do, a small church in a privileged white community on the edge of the left coast. Carol Brubaker Walton reminded me this week of Margaret Mead’s statement, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

I invite you this week to use the tools at your disposal. Call or email our elected representatives and let them know what you want to see happen. Engage gently with those on social media who are angry and riling themselves and others up. And then pray. Pray that the hearts of those

who are filled with anger, hatred and excitement may be gentled and transformed by the Holy Spirit. Consider praying in particular for one person you saw on the screen. And pray that our president-elect and his team may be kept safe and may be given an abundance of wisdom to lead this country into peace and justice and restore the norms of civil society.

People of God, we have tools. Let us use them so that we may be the midwives of the new, the reign of God.