

**Epiphany 1
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January 10, 2021

This week has been full of the unexpected, and unprecedented. In the Gospel, we see John baptizing people and preaching repentance and baptism. So many people went out to see John and hear what he was saying. It might have been because they thought he was the messiah they were waiting for. John was not what the people thought he was.

John wasn't the person that you would expect to see preaching- he was dressed in camel's hair with a leather belt and he ate such odd food- locusts and wild honey. John isn't the typical prophet you'd see back in the day. He wasn't in the synagogue, he was out in the wilderness, with the people. Even more so, he is baptising people in the river. That was unheard of back then. If you wanted to be baptised or have another ritual performed, you had to go to the synagogue, not the local river.

John was such a weird guy, that it was a wonder that anyone would go out and see him, hear him and even be baptised by him. If you headed reviews of this guy, would you go out and see him? Because I'm sure I wouldn't. He's such a weird guy, not at all what you would expect from a prophet, or even a messiah, like some people might have thought he was. He was not what was expected, and no one had ever done what he was doing before.

This week, we witnessed something very unexpected and unprecedented. We saw people storm and break into the capitol building. This is in no way something we could have expected.

While this is something that has been seen as an act of terrorism and called a coup, it is for one thing, un Christian. We are called to be peaceful and non violent, but the people that were storming the capital building and stealing things from the building, and going into the offices of the politicians, and going through their mail, is not what we as Christians are called to do.

We have to fight this violence with peace and do what is the right thing. If we respond with violence, and hate, we are no better than the people who organized and took part in this. How we respond to this clear act of insurrection,

is what separates us from the others. We must be peaceful, as hard as it might be, and respond with love, not hate.

There are many different emotions circulating right now. Some being hate, indifference, sadness, grief, anger, curiosity, anxiety about not knowing what is going to happen next. These are all normal things to feel given the state of our country right now. But we, as Christians know that we have to be proactive in being the change we want to see in the world. And right now, we need change.

It is completely unacceptable for these things to take place and for little to no response from the authorities. We are called to be the change we want to see. We are the ones that have to speak out against the injustices going on in the world and especially our country. It is in our very nature as Christian to be peaceful and strive for justice and peace- even with those we don't see eye to eye with.

When we are baptized, we make promises. We promise to persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord. We promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We promise to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. These are the promises we all make when we get baptized, and reaffirm when someone else gets baptized. We promise to hold these up, and do it all with God's help.

As Christians, we know we can do anything with God's help, especially hold up our baptismal promises. These are without a doubt tough times, and there is much uncertainty. More than there usually is.

As much violence and hate there is going on in the country, we are called now, more than ever to follow the way Jesus prepared for us. Even as people were tearing the clothes off of His back, Jesus was still loving his neighbor and choosing the way of love.

Like we have to do after anything this monumental, we have to heal. As individuals, as a community, as Christians, and as a country. Our presiding Bishop, Michael Curry has this to say on healing

“This is the way of love that can heal our hurts, that can heal our land, that can help us to become one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and

justice for all. So, I would ask you to do two things. I'm asking you to make a commitment, a renewed commitment, to live the way of love as Jesus has taught us and to do it by making a commitment to go out and bless somebody. Bless somebody you disagree with. Bless somebody you agree with. But to go out and bless somebody by helping somebody along the way. Go out and bless somebody by listening to their story and their life. To go out and be an instrument of God's peace, an agent of God's love. And then I would ask you to pray. Pray for this nation but pray with some specificity. Pray that we may have the wisdom and the courage to love.”

Healing during this time can be difficult, but do not fret, we have each other. We are here for each other, as a community. And we must not forget that. Our differences make us strong, but so does our support for each other. No matter how bad things may get, **no matter how unexpected and unprecedented**, we know that we can always turn towards the path of love and love our neighbor as ourselves. Being there for each other and loving each other- that's what Jesus asks of us. This is what we affirm this with our baptismal covenant. This is our promise we make to ourselves and to God.