

It's not everyday a priest gets to baptize a bishop. In fact, I go so far as to say most every priest never gets a chance to baptize a bishop. But since I started off the month of November baptizing a Hogwarts professor, a Jedi princess, and the Jungle Book's Bagheera, it seems only fitting that I finish up the month baptizing a bishop.

For those of you who may not remember or may not have been here, here's a recap of my sermon: *go ahead* . . .

The three souls who were baptized brought to us through their Christening a renewed sense of love, hope and courage. Severus brings the story of how deep, how lasting, how motivating love always is. Leia-Belle Grace pulls hope from the past through to the present in order that there is a future. Caleb Bagheera reminds us to let courage lead us in our efforts to build and sustain community. This morning Bishop brings us more than just the ability to move diagonally, which I am sure he can do masterfully. Bishop brings us connection, or better still "connectivity".

Connectivity is a particularly post-modern word that suits well this wonderfully ancient name "Bishop". And it fits nicely into today's scripture readings with their emphasis on the connections between our lives and life in God, between our lives and the lives of those who live on the edges, between God and us-them, together.

Connectivity is a word most often used by computer folks to describe not just a linear connection—A connects to B connects to C connects to D, so then A can get to D. Connectivity describes the capacity for the interconnection of platforms, systems and applications. It's about fluid, dynamic connection across different ways of communicating. To measure the extent to which components or nodes of a network are connected to one another, and the ease or speed with which they can "converse" is to know a system's strength of connectivity. For example: I can open my laptop, log onto an internet connection and go to Google to search for where I might be able to get a replacement belt for my Dyson vacuum cleaner. I can order the belt from Amazon, using smile.amazon so Saint John's gets a donation of a percentage of the purchase. I purchase the belt with PayPal and Amazon sends a

message to one of its affiliates to send the belt on their behalf. Then I close out Google and open Facebook, where I will find advertisements for Dyson vacuum cleaners showing up on my news feed for several days. This is what the computer world means by connectivity. And the computer world thinks it thought up the idea of connectivity all by itself. But, connectivity, across platforms and systems and applications is as old as dirt. And its roots are particularly spiritual, God-centered even.

We are connected to God through the very breath we take, and through the ways we tend to those in need. We are connected to one another because of our connection to God. “Umbuntu” is another current day computer word describing this interconnectivity that is actually quite ancient and quite spiritual. Archbishop Desmond Tutu teaches “Unbuntu Spirituality” in his efforts to bring about Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. By it he emphasizes that humanity is a quality we owe to each other: when I recognize the humanity in you, I acknowledge my own humanity. When I see the divine in you (we would say the Christ in you), the Christ in me is more readily apparent in me. “We are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am.”

I’ve thought and prayed a lot about connectivity and imbuntu as I prepared for Bishop’s baptism today. It first came when I realized that Bishop is a beacon of what we in the Episcopal Church call “Apostolic Succession”. By that we mean that every bishop within the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions has been made a bishop by the laying on of hands by other bishops who were likewise made bishop by bishops. This connection from bishop to bishop can be traced all the way back to the original 12 apostles. And every priest and deacon is ordained by a bishop. So, Bishop Talton ordained me deacon twenty years ago last Wednesday, a few years later Bishop Anderson ordained me priest. I can trace my ordained life back to an apostle. I have the great honor and privilege to baptize Bishop Arthur today, and Bodhi a few months ago, and Severus, Leia-Belle, and Caleb three weeks ago. And, God willing, I will get to baptize until my very

last breath on this earth has been breathed. Holy Connectivity. Bishop connects us this morning to Christ because he reminds us of our avowed life to seek Christ in all persons, to respect the dignity of every human being and to always look for ways to repent and return to God when we have fallen short. He connects us to each other because no child of God is ever baptized in isolation, always in community. We need each other to be who God would have us be. He connects us to our God, through the Christ, not just tactically, with the laying on of hands by bishop after bishop after bishop, but in calling us reaffirm that it is only by God's help that we live out our vows.

When I put this gift of holy connectivity next to the gifts of love and hope and courage that Severus, Leia-Belle and Caleb brought at the beginning of the month, I am overwhelmed with how vulnerable a thing it is to be baptized, to stand before God and God's people, have the living waters of our great and gracious God poured over us, bringing us out of the depths of darkness and death into new and everlasting light and life, of being told that no matter the platform or network or application, you belong to God. This holy water brings with it refreshment, healing, soothing, harnessed power, creative ways to play and be renewed, cleansing, strengthening, commissioning. We but have to let go of an ego that says we aren't ever to be vulnerable, let go of the illusion that we don't need anyone or any connection to a power greater than ourselves. Let go of the addiction to winning/gaining at all costs.

About nine years ago now something happened at this very font that has left an indelible mark on my soul. Michael Lopez was about two years old and his older sister Rebecca carried him up to the communion rail. With one hand Michael had a strong grip on Rebecca's shoulder. He was not going to let go of his strong, loving, protective big sister. And in the other hand he had a plastic toy he had wrestled one of his siblings for, or maybe it was another child in the church's playroom with whom he negotiated. At any rate, it was his current "best toy". As Michael and Rebecca walked up to receive communion, passing the font, Michael took notice of

the water and squirmed a bit to get a better look. Rebecca refocused him and they continued up the isle. On the way back from receiving the Sacrament of God's Real and Holy presence they stopped at the font. Michael looked down at the water, which must have looked like a water-play table to him. But, he had a really hard choice to make. Does he let go of his sister in order to dip a hand in, or does he let go of the "best toy"? He looked to his one arm holding his sister, then to the other arm holding the toy, then to Rebecca's face, then back down to the water. Finally he drops the toy into the font and leans way over, still gripping Rebecca's arm, and splashes all around the font, he splashes Rebecca, and I am sure a couple of people sitting closest to the font got a bit wet too. And that's how it's supposed to be: Living water is supposed to be pour out and splashed out all over us, and we are supposed to let go of that which we think we need but which cannot compare to the joy of being immersed in the living water of Christ our Redeemer and Sanctifier. And we're suppose to carry one another to the living water when we cannot get there on our own. We're supposed to celebrate with one another, give one another a drink of water when thirsty, clean one another when covered in the muck of life, let each other soak in the soothing bath of God's grace, and honor everyone's access point to the living water. Holy connectivity.

"Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and came to your aid?"

'Truly I tell you: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'

Holy connectivity.

Will all of you witnessing these vows do you in your power to uphold this person in his life in Christ? We will with God's help. Holy Connectivity. Love, Hope, Courage, Connectivity. It's been a good month of baptisms. Amen.