

Today is the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every year we read about Jesus being baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptizer. And usually, I preach about Jesus' baptism which is the beginning of his ministry.

But today, I want to focus something a bit different. I want to focus on your ministries. And I'd ask you to turn in the BCP to p. 855.

This is a section of the Prayer Book called the Catechism. It's a summary of Christian teaching in the form of questions and answers. On p. 855 is a section on ministry.

The first question is

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Notice who's first. You. Not me. Not the deacons. Not our bishop. But lay persons. You are ministers within the church. Every baptized Christian is called to engage in ministry.

So what kind of ministry do you have? Back to p. 855:

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

There are a number of things here. But I briefly want to flag two of them. First, is the line that your job, your ministry has two basic arenas, two areas. First, you are, "according to the gifts given (you), to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world."

Lay people, more than ordained people, are most easily able to minister out in the world. Part of that ministry is through your jobs and vocations. Every year at Labor Day we focus on those aspects of your ministries.

But you also have a ministry, according to the gifts given you, to minister within the church, as the catechism says, "to take (your) place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church."

That's what I want to focus on today. Your ministries within the church. You are not supposed to be consumers of ministry. You are supposed to be active participants, active in ministry, according to the gifts God gives you.

And so today I've asked several folks to come up briefly and share about their ministries within the church, and what they mean to them. And as you listen to them, I want you to think of your own ministries.

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Thanks to all who shared.

Remember, "Who are the ministers of the church?" All of us, lay and ordained. All Christians, by virtue of our baptisms are ministers.

There are inserts in the bulletins. I'd ask you to take a moment and think about your own ministries, and maybe jot them down on the sheet. If you're not involved in a ministry, maybe getting involved can be a New Year's resolution.

A bit later in the service, at the Offertory, I'll invite you to bring the cards to God's altar, to offer them up to God.

If you are listing ministries you're currently doing, there's no need to put your name on them.

But if you'd like to be plugged into a certain ministry at St. Paul's that you're not currently involved with, put your name and contact information in the place at the bottom and we'll try to follow up with you.

How will you live out your ministries in 2015? Take a few moments to think about it.