

The Legacy We Leave

[Text - Luke 11:5-13]

Pastor Dave Shackle
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Last Sunday afternoon, I had the privilege of baptizing my newest great-nephew, Chase, who technically will soon be my newest nephew. Allow me to explain. One of my nieces has given birth to eight children, and has raised none of them. Her mother, my sister Mary K, is raising four; three others have been adopted; and Chase is right now on a road-trip to San Diego, with my youngest sister Katie and her husband James, who are adopting him. As they say, no family is perfect - but every family does have some perfectly peculiar stories to tell! The baptism took place at First Presbyterian Church in Alliance, Ohio, with a good sized gathering including Chase's biological parents, his foster parents, his soon-to-be parents, plus an eclectic array of other family and friends. From the colorfully tattooed with multiple piercings, to the respectfully dressed in their Sunday best - this wonderfully diverse group of people came together to sing and pray, to celebrate and to affirm the life of a beautiful child.

Holy Baptism is a terrific reminder of the interconnectedness of the entire Human Family. It's a magnificent opportunity to acknowledge and accept our peculiar family backgrounds, and our less-than-perfect selves. We are *all* flawed human beings; yet Baptism reminds us that each of us is imprinted with a Divine pattern and purpose, image and likeness, which is absolutely flawless! Every person ever born is bestowed with particular gifts and talents, strengths and weaknesses, abilities and disabilities, which makes that person unique. Therefore, one of the greatest gifts you or I can offer to our Divine Creator - and to each other - is the gift of our authentic selves. Jesus says we shouldn't hide our light under a bushel, but rather let it shine forth for all to see! Oftentimes what keeps us from doing this, is the fear that when

we put ourselves out there, our flaws and frailties will also brightly shine-froth. This is where the Sacrament of Holy Baptism can prove extremely helpful.

In Baptism, you and I acknowledge our total dependence on Divine *Grace* to save and sustain us. We admit that we can't make it on our own. We need to connect with our Holy Source; and we also need a connection with our quirky, yet compassionate, Family of Faith. For when you and I truly embrace our Baptism - which immerses us in the perfect love of our Heavenly Parent - we can begin to let go of the fear and self-doubt that keeps us from living fully and freely as children of God. By the Power of the Holy Spirit, you and I can grow and develop together into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ - the Compassionate One who welcomes and embraces *all* people with the Life-changing Love of God.

One of the beautiful things about a baptism in this church, is the fact that it truly is a community event. In addition to Giuliana's biological family, she - and each child baptized here - also connects to a much larger family: the Brecksville United Church of Christ, and the world-wide Body of Christ. Within this inclusive, extended family, every child can receive nurture, support, and encouragement as she or he develops and matures. And you and I have the wonderful opportunity to watch to these children grow in faith, and to *grow-up* right before our eyes! Because before you know it, Giuliana will be running down the hall to Sunday School class with the rest of the kids; or just running around the building, *like* the rest of the kids!

This morning I believe I heard everyone here promise Giuliana their "love, support, and care - as she lives and grows among us as a child of God" And while I won't argue the legality of that pledge, I will hold you - and myself - accountable to the essential spirit of that Promise. We owe it to all our children, to *all children*,

and to ourselves, to cultivate a safe, secure and sacred environment in which we can all grow and thrive together. This means that we will not only support and care for our *Church* Home, but that we will also take better care of our *Earthly* Home.

As a father, grandfather, uncle and [some would even say] a *great* uncle I am concerned about the legacy we leave to the future generations. For although Divine Love and Grace *is* limitless, our natural resources - and our earth's ability to repair itself - are not. Therefore, we must increase our efforts to decrease the damage and the wastefulness that we so casually allow to take place. It's the least we can do for these little ones that we love. And it's a wonderful way to show our gratitude and respect for this beautiful and bountiful planet that we all call "Home!"