

**Die Pröpstin
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Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

We listen to Luke, chapter three.

„And John went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

This Wednesday, Lent started. Ash Wednesday. In school service on Ash Wednesdays, children used to have a cross of ashes painted on their forehead. This cross visibly marked the beginning of something special. A special period of fasting. Seven weeks. It also marked an experience: This child is distinguished in the eyes of God. Not only in certain times. Always. Raised as a Protestant Christian, I used to have ambivalent feelings about such signs. As a pastor, spiritually and homiletically working with children, it took me a while to gain another perspective.

We are dependent. We need signs of belonging, signs of being seen and held. This kind of dependence makes us human. There is another sign of belonging, being seen and being held: the sign of baptism. Whenever we listen to God’s word in this room, at some point I have the feeling of losing myself into this kind of deep blue in the cross in front of us. And sometimes, while listening to the persons speaking, I forgot myself and everything around me gazing into the extensive blue of the sky outside these windows. Different shades of blue – surrounding us, telling us how we are surrounded by God’s promise given in every baptism: I, God almighty, hold you in my presence, guide you in peace, call you mine, wherever you go. And I won’t stop asking and begging you: Give answer to my love for you. This is, in a nutshell, God’s baptism message for me, symbolized in clear water. *Blue* water, as children like to paint it.

John refers to a certain aspect of baptism. Metanoia. A baptism of return. Repentance, they say. And what we see in this kind of metanoia, of return, is heartfilling and magic. A call to return of this kind means: give yourself a break of being troubled with yourself. Give yourself a chance to stop and look and turn somewhere else.

John is known as the one who is preparing the way, who is pointing to somebody else. We are usually tempted to point towards ourselves, longing to be seen with all our abilities and

achievements, and not to point to the ones who actually guided and accompanied our journey (of faith). Metanoia, return, means to change perspectives here - and to start with myself, start turning. Turn to where, turn to whom?

Meditating the blue of the cross, letting my mind fall into it, I get a sense of how I could turn to the one who walked over the blue, the blue water, who walked under this same blue sky. Who reminds me of how the skies opened during his own baptism at the Jordan river. There Jesus received God's word and sign, God's promise and peace. And we are still part of it.

Because God has made His home in us. You may feel lost or frightened, but God's Holy Spirit is within you. You may feel alone, but God has built himself a very stable home in your soul. You may feel torn and pulled in all directions. But if you become quiet here and now, you can feel that you are standing in the beam of God's love. You are God's manger. You are the dust into which God breathes life. It's time to turn. Every morning, seeing the first signs of blue, we are reminded of this magic moment when we are given us a chance to turn to God. Not just towards ourself, but to God. Sometimes losing myself in the blue outside the window I even recognize some birds. And I remember the other sign, the dove. In the story of the flood, the dove became the bearer of hope and a new covenant. Well, that dove rests on you and me, the new covenant has been made with you and me, today. Amen.