

Sermon for the First Sunday after the Epiphany (2020)

by Fr Nick Mezacapa

The baptism of Jesus, the turnstile moment, certainly in the whole ministry of Jesus, is John taking his place in offering Jesus up and forward on his ministry. But I want to focus a little bit on the Genesis reading today, especially that first part. *“In the beginning there was a deep darkness and the earth was formless and void. And a wind from God, a wind from God, swept over the water and things begin to take shape”*... Light, darkness — day, night — plants, animals, mountains, humans, planets, stars, I suppose... And in this image, everything is formed and given shape, out of nothing! There's a great term in biblical Hebrew that describes "nothingness — void" and that term is *“Tohu va-Vohu”*. I love that word, *“Tohu va-Vohu”* - diffused, gray, nothingness. Out of that void in this ancient story, everything came to be! In this beautiful description, a wind from God, "the great spirit", sweeps across the water, and all things begin to take form. A sweeping, warm wind that shapes the Creation. It makes you think of the words of the prophet Isaiah describing *“God as the potter, and we are the clay, shaped by gods hands”*... formed, if you would, out of formlessness. It's kind of like giving an Italian mother a pork chop, two sweet potatoes, an egg, half a cup of cornmeal, and some paperclips, and she'll make a four course dinner for six!

Well, those Godly winds blow through our lives, and we are shaped by them as we go. Here are some examples: **1.)** Katie likes school, and is a good

student. She studies, reads, and decides to enter the city spelling bee. It's tough going, it's very competitive, and she wins! (The wind.) Her English teacher was such a great help that Katie decides to be an English teacher too. (Shaped by that wind.) **2.)** Another. Ray does not like his neighbor. He thinks his neighbor is a snob. Well, Ray falls off his ladder in his backyard (the wind). His neighbor hears the commotion, runs over, gives Ray first aid and calls 911. Ray is humbled and befriends the neighbor and apologizes for being so cold. (The shape.) **3.)** In my own life, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer back in the late 80s. (The wind). And I realized as I face my own mortality that there's a short list of things that are really important. And that short list was established and maintained even to this day. (The shape).

You see the pattern. Through our experiences, as God's creation, we get blown around by the spiritual wind... And we are shaped and aimed toward what gives us a sense of purpose and points us onto a new path through our transformed attitude and perspective. We are re-created by the movement and the gusts of God's wind. It will carry you to a new way of seeing what you thought you knew, shaping your life on the way. In the spirit in the one Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.