

For Christmas I received a book by Andrew Roberts entitled Leadership in War: Essential Lessons from those who made History.

Roberts is a biographer and military historian who has written many books about Churchill, Napoleon, Hitler, World War II, etc. Leadership in War is a series of sketches of how nine leaders of the modern era led in times of war. They're a mixed bag – George Marshall, Eisenhower, Churchill, and De Gaulle, but also Hitler, and Stalin. (Yep, I'm absorbing leadership skills for running the parish from Hitler and Stalin).

Today, I want to look at this idea of leadership as Roberts presents it – in the context of the Gospel for today's Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In Matthew's version of the Baptism of Jesus, John is clearly troubled at the thought of baptizing Our Lord. "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus is the Messiah. He has no sins to forgive. Nevertheless, Jesus says, "Allow it for now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus knows He has no need of this baptism. Rather, He wants to give to the waters the power to

forgive sins – but, also, and this is my main point, He wants to identify with us with us so as to lead us to salvation. That is, He wants to lead by example. Sometimes we're to act and live, not for own benefit, but for the sake of others. That is true leadership.

What do we ourselves do in our faith lives to give a good example for others to follow? For whom are we each called to be leaders in the ways of Discipleship? Because we are all called to do this for someone. Here I want to go back to Roberts' book. One point he makes is that without the challenge of world war these people would not have become great historical leaders. They needed the right arena. "It would be next to impossible,' he writes, "for a prime minister of Luxembourg in time of peace to be a truly great historical leader."

We may each think, "I have no gifts of leadership. I'm the ultimate Prime Minister of Luxembourg. I'm not even that. I'm a nobody!" But on this feast day remember, our own Baptism is both a call to leadership and the source of the graces needed to fulfill that role. When we are

baptized, we are baptized into the life and person of Jesus. We are joined to Him. And Jesus is Priest, Prophet and King. Don't forget that King part. We each are members of the body of the King of the Universe – the ultimate Leader.

How are we each supposed to live out that kingly role? By leading others in the ways of faith. Think for a moment, whom are you meant to lead to Jesus? Is it your children, spouse, a neighbor, co-workers, friends, fellow parishioners? And there's no age restriction to Christian leadership. This is for children to think about, as well. Kids, are you doing your job of leading your siblings and classmates in the way of faith?

Roberts also mentions that each of the leaders he covers had a profound sense of self-belief. And they all believed they had crucial tasks to achieve in life – not all were good goals, the world-wide Communist Revolution or the Supremacy of the Aryan race, for example. But they were all motivated by deep convictions. That is also

what discipleship looks like. The encounter with Jesus brings with it and builds up in us, Jesus' Disciples, the conviction and motivation to lead others to the One they have come to know and love.

How are we each doing as such faith leaders? Let's go back to Roberts' definition of great leaders needing the historical opportunity to shine – a great war or conflict to prove their leadership skills – the proper stage. We may think, "That's not my life." But every one of us is living through the greatest world war of all, salvation history. We all are active participants in the unfolding of the Kingdom of Heaven against the forces of evil – whether we want to be or not. And we are graced by our baptism into Christ with all the spiritual resources we need to lead to Christ those people God has given us to evangelize.

We are called to greatness – in the spiritual realm. Roberts relates that Napoleon said that in his revolutionary army, freed from the rigid social hierarchy of the Ancient Regime France, every French soldier carried in his knapsack the baton of a Marshal of France. In other

words, there were no limits on how high a brave and talented soldier could rise in his army. So it also is in the Body of Christ. In every baptized person there lies a saint and hero in the making.

This coming Tuesday night at 6:30 in the Social Hall we begin another Alpha Course here at Holy Family. This is a ten-week opportunity to join with others each Tuesday night to share a meal, watch videos about questions people have about Jesus, and discuss your beliefs and thoughts in a non-judgmental atmosphere. It's for Christians and non-Christians alike. Whom does God want you to invite to it? And make sure you promise to go with them. Lead by example. And if it's not Alpha, then there are many other ways to guide family and friends to Christ.

It is true, as Roberts says, that some people are graced by God with extraordinary charisms of leadership and responsibility. They are meant to lead entire nations and peoples, or they are given responsibility over large groups of Christians, etc. But all of us baptized

followers of Christ the King – even the shy, the introverted, the theologically uneducated – all are called to be leaders in some way, someday, at some level. Jesus is depending on each of us to lead someone, maybe many someones, to Him. We were created to be great leaders in our own sphere of life. Will we answer our call to lead?