Devotion & Activity of January 8, 2021
with LeeAnne in the
Christian Formation Office

How do we experience God? Being God's beloved Child

In this week's scripture we learn about Jesus's Baptism by his cousin John. *As Jesus was coming out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased*. Mark 1:10-11

When I was a child, I imagined a dove resting gently on Jesus's shoulder, tender and trusting and sweet. I could hear how God's voice might have made everyone look around in awe and wonder.

My friend, Rev. Donna Pappenhausen is an artist. She took a class with Valerie Tutson who challenged her to find herself in the story of Jesus Baptism. My friend went home and birthed the painting on the cover of our bulletin. Look at Jesus, John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit full of grace and power in the form of a dove splicing through this moment and all of creation. Pastor Andy told me that in the Greek the word used literally means "dive-bombed". The Holy Spirit dive-bombed Jesus and all present to experience the wonder of God. I can feel the energy in this painting. My friend also shared that she is in the painting. She envisioned herself with Jesus. Look at the woman in the front that is my friend. She envisioned that Jesus asked her to hold his robe as he went to John to be Baptized. They are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses.

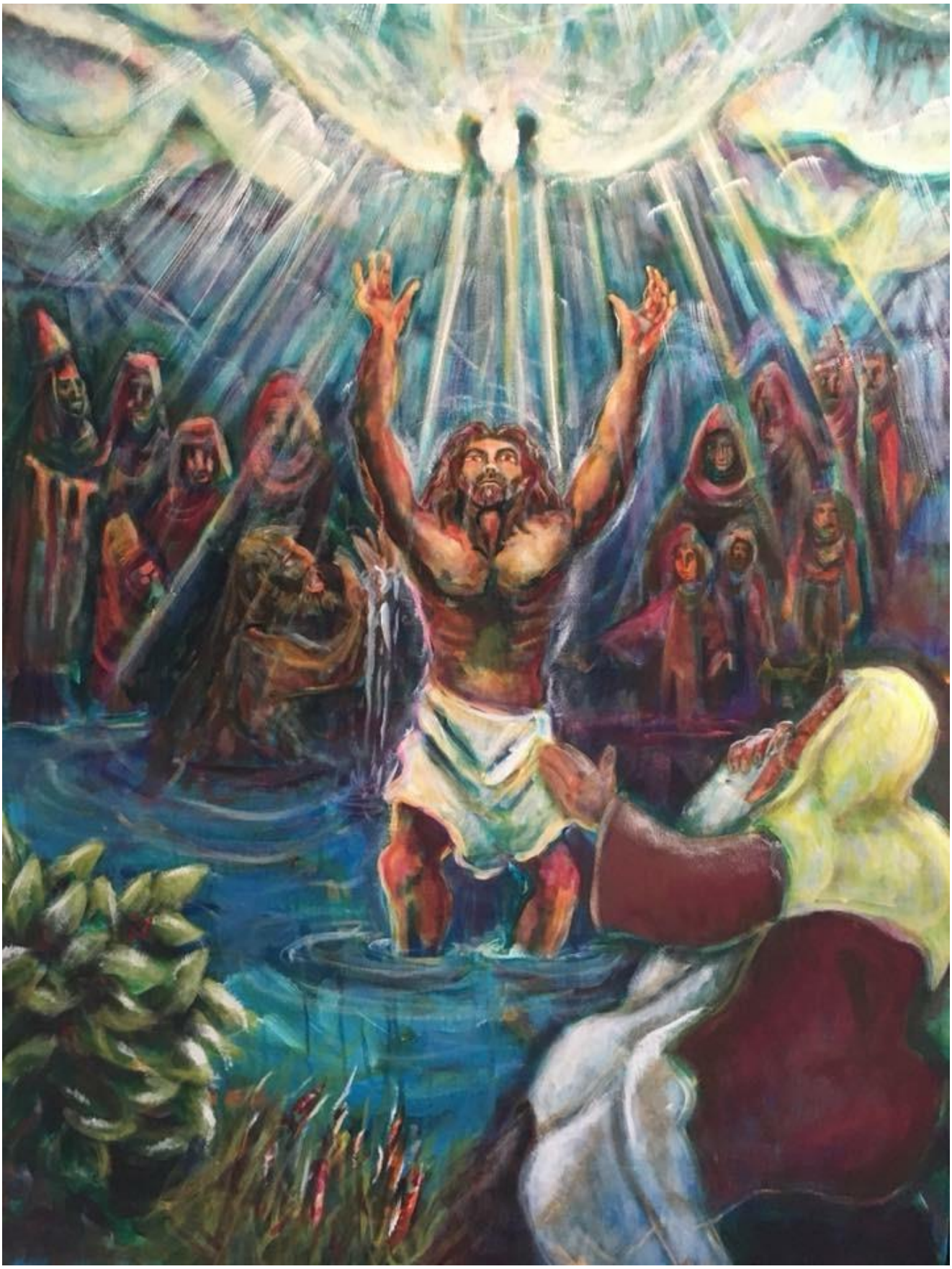
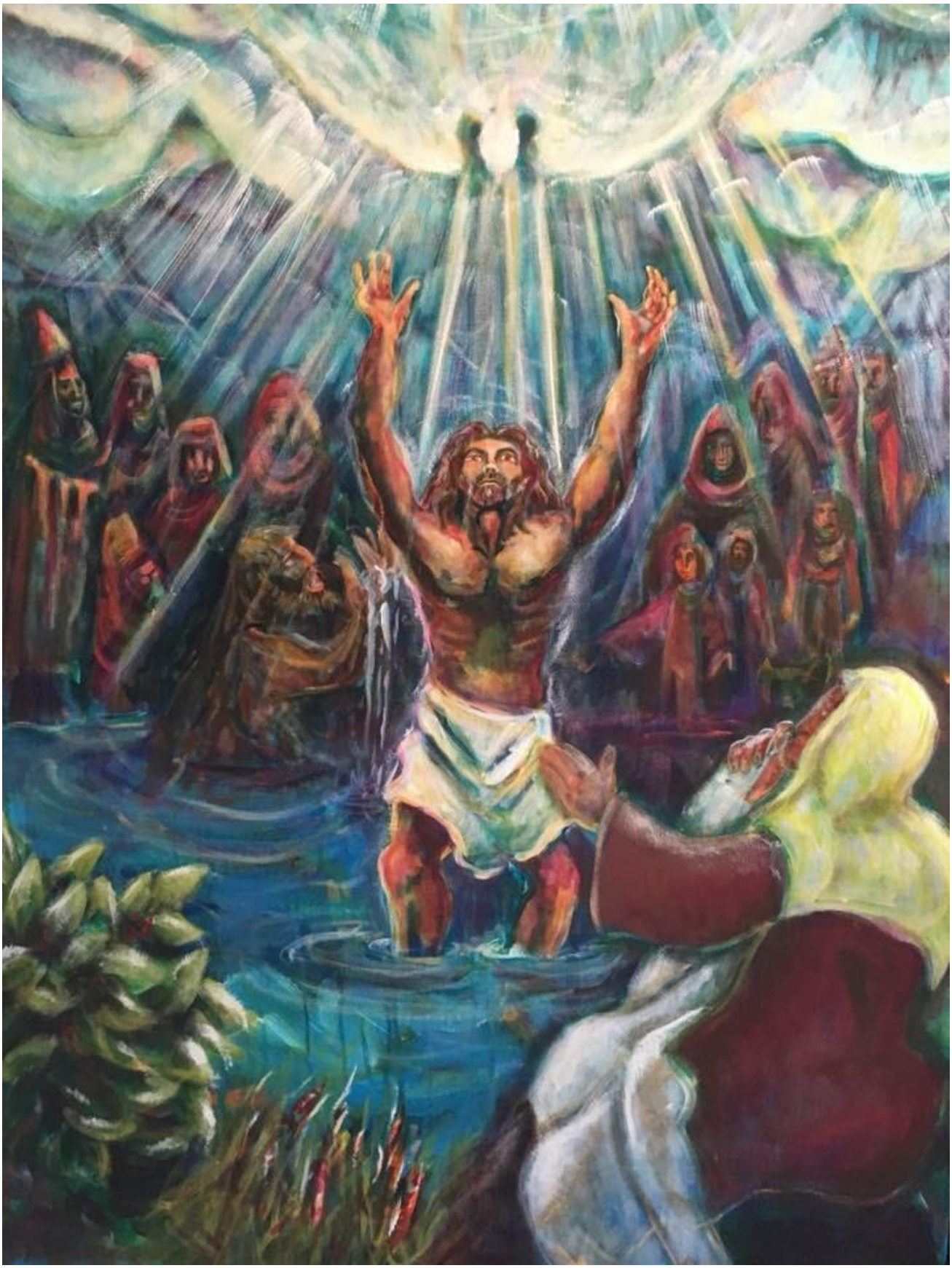
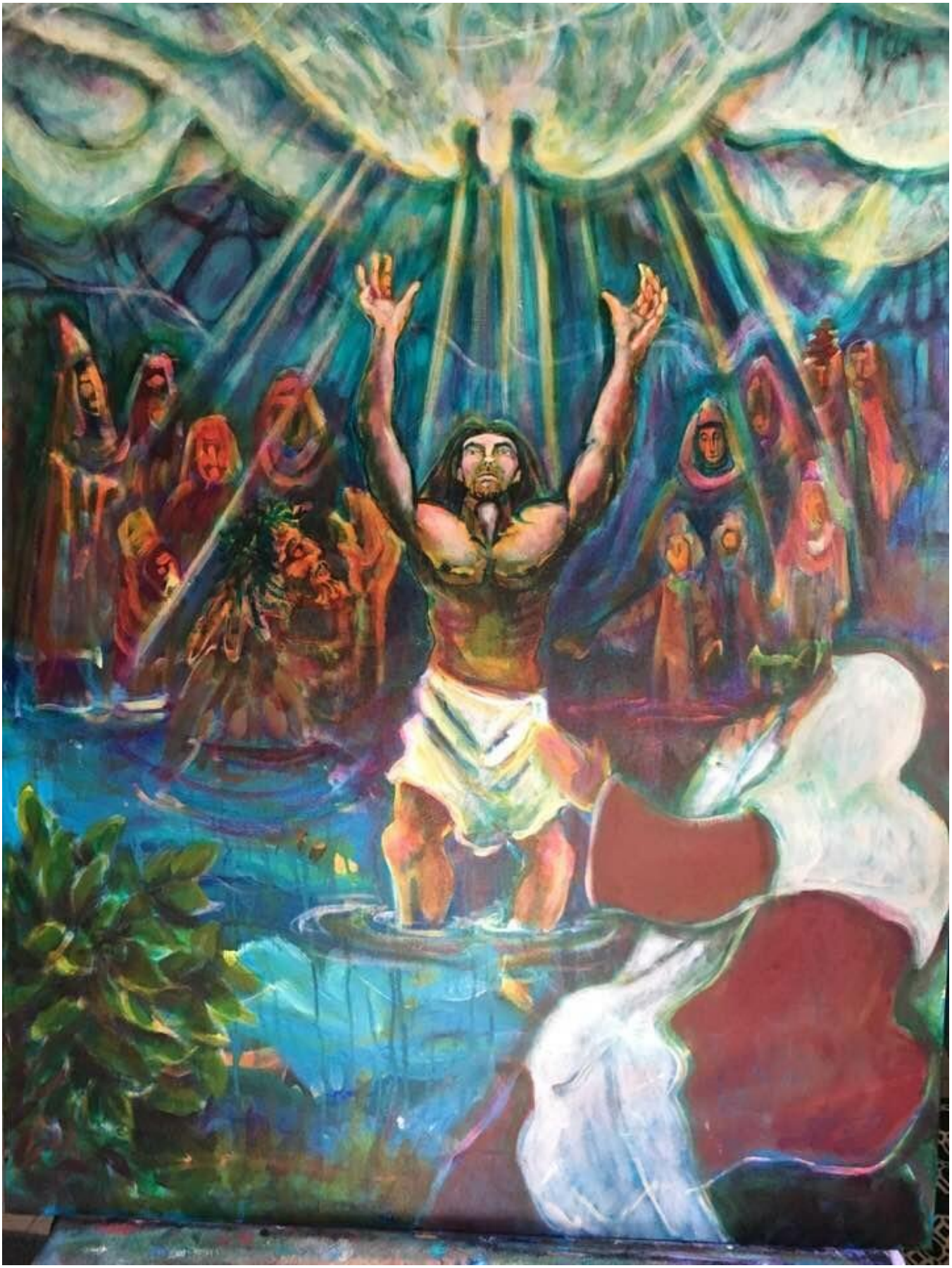
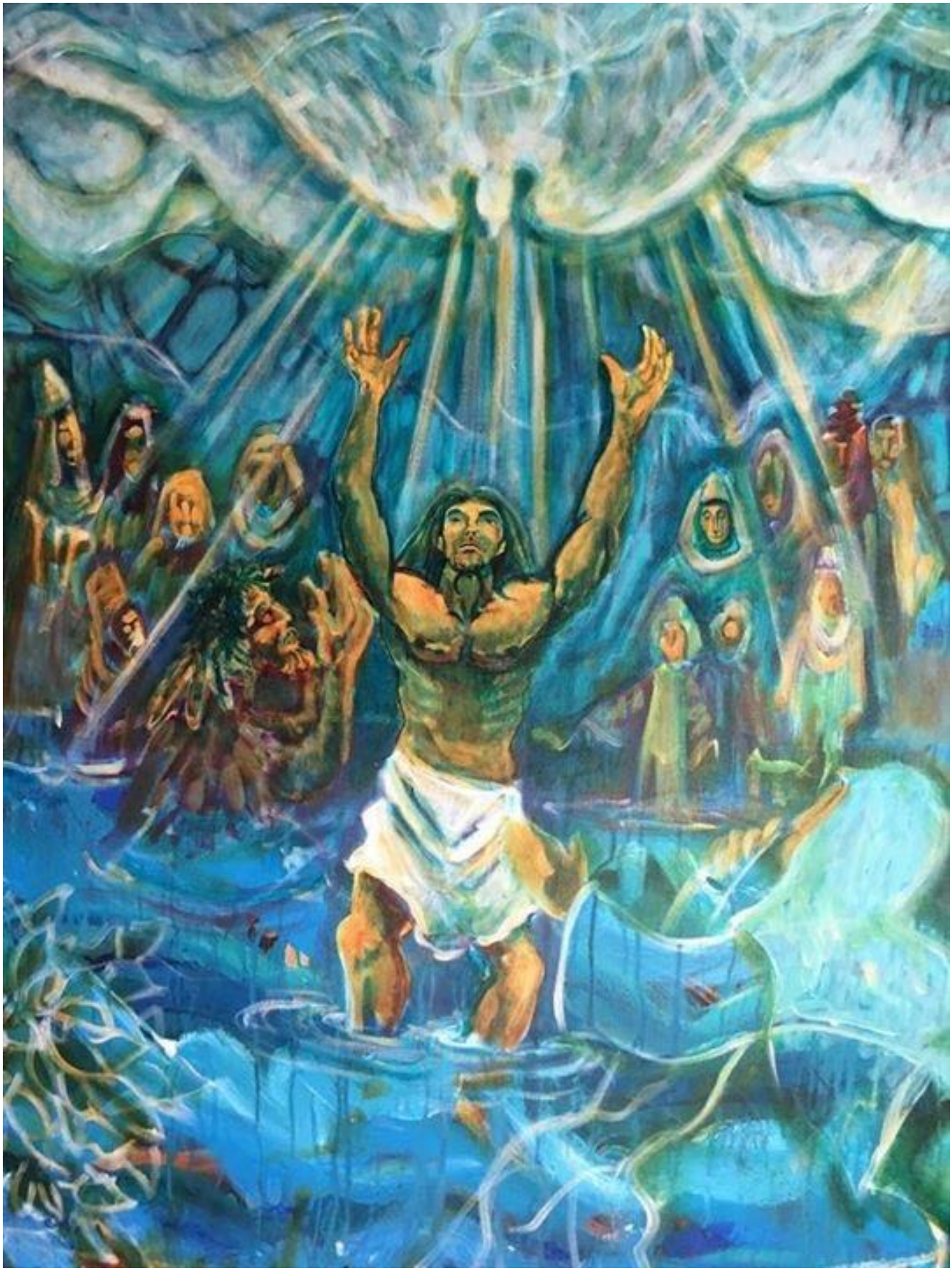
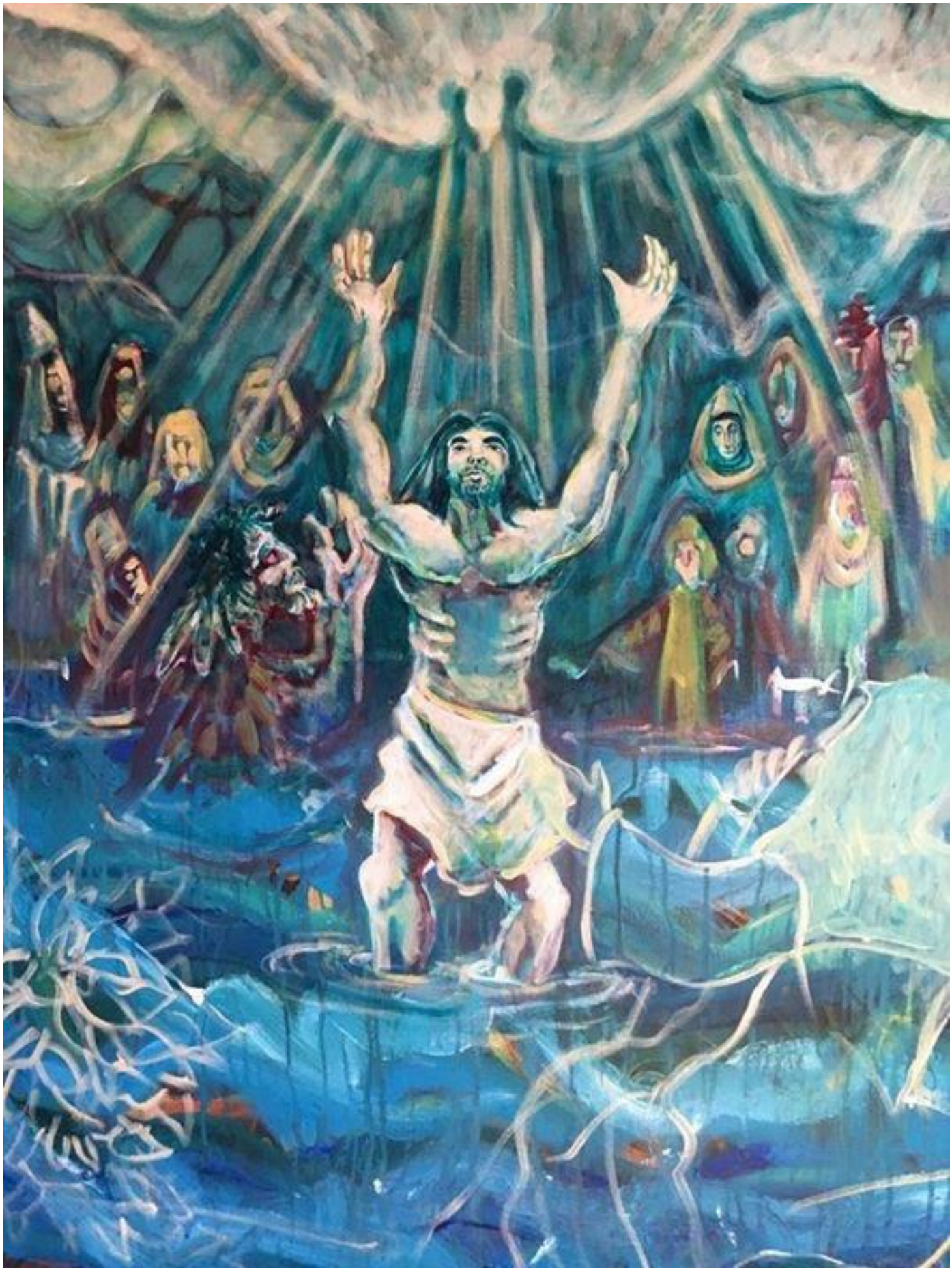
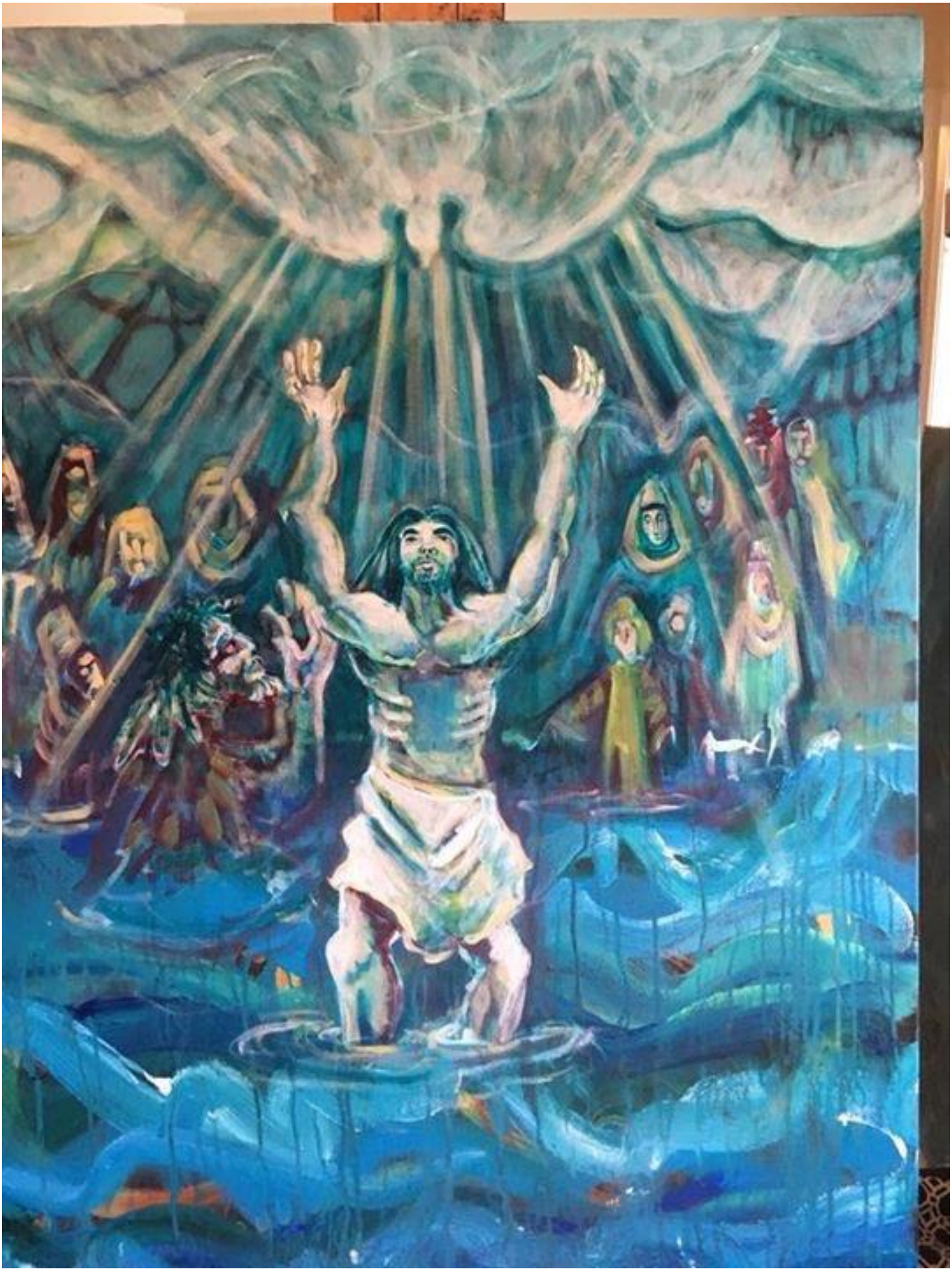
Where are you in the painting? Have you been Baptized? Have you seen a child be Baptized recently? What does it mean to be God's beloved child? Take a look in the mirror and say out loud, "Behold God's beloved child _____(your name) in whom God is well pleased". Say it to a parent or child or grandparent. It's important to be reminded we are God's children created in His image.

Whether you experience God through nature and imagine God as the gentle dove on Jesus's shoulder tender, trusting and sweet or you experience the power exploding through the heavens and reverberating through creation like my friend ***or in your own way***, you are right with God. Know. You are God's beloved child.

Activity: You will need finger paint, watercolors, markers or colored pencils and a canvas or paper for your work. A smock and an easel may be helpful too or a table.

1. Consider what baptism means to you. When were you baptized? What was the last baptism you saw. Were you a member of the family, the church, or were you the pastor? Did the pastor have special water from sacred places around the world? What was the baptismal font like? Did the pastor use a shell to perform the ceremony? What did the parents and godparents say? What did the pastor say and do? What did you say and do as part of the congregation? Think about Jesus's baptism and where you are in the story.
2. My friend, Rev. Donna Pappenhousen, has generously shared her process. Look at each of the paintings here. Watch the layers build and grow the scene to tell the story. I love the first scene with all that water and the energy and motion there. Watch as each layer builds texture, clarity and definition. Pictures are below, so scroll down to see.
3. Pray. Ask God to help you create a picture or painting of Jesus baptism, your baptism or the baptism of someone you love.
4. Paint or draw depending on what materials you have. Be sure to include yourself in the picture. You might just focus on the water like in the first painting my friend did. Make this as simple or complex as feels right for you.
5. Send me a picture of your picture or painting. I would really love to share these with everyone online and include a few in our newsletter.

I am so grateful to all of you who are reaching out to me and sharing these words and activities with children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors. It's good to be connected! It's good to know that we can grow in new ways in these times.

Much love and God Bless you every one,

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