

# Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

January 9, 2022

From the desk of Fr. Paulo...

**Happy Feast of the Baptism of the Lord!** With this wonderful feast we conclude the Christmas Season and enter the Ordinary Time of the Church's Liturgical Calendar (Church's Worship Calendar).

The Baptism of the Lord signify for us the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ, for "he is now anointed and sent forth by the Father," to a task that would take the total human life of Jesus.

Today let us recall our own baptism and in each mass, we will renew our Baptismal Promises and in doing so we recommit our lives again to Jesus Christ. That we strive to live out the 10 Commandments and to embrace the Gospel values.

Let our lives be a sign to others that Jesus Christ is Our Lord and none other. There is an event in the Old Testament when the Israelites were now at the cusp of crossing the Jordan River and to enter the Promised Land and to possess it. At that critical juncture, Joshua boldly proclaimed to them, "**...As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord**" **Joshua 24:14**.

This simple yet bold proclamation, Joshua inspired untold Israelites to do the same and they were empowered to cross without fear into the new horizon, across the River Jordan.

Imagine if the father of a household were to strive and live up to his baptismal promises in this difficult post Christian culture, what great impact, influence he would make to his wife and to his children? How boldly without fear would his wife and children follow him "**to cross the Jordan River**" that is through life's obstacles, the unknowns, the falls, trials and even disappointments?

Returning to Liturgical Cycle in the year, some may wonder why is it necessary that we have a Liturgical Calendar? Can we not simply just move on in spiritual journey? Well, other non-Catholic Christians may do so by having their faith journey's themes chosen by each minister or groups of ministers themselves.

But in our Catholic Church, Orthodox Church and in some high Anglican Churches we have marked our spiritual journey-worship journey in set patterned manner as the Church in whole as patterned by the Apostles' lives and activities as a Church.

The wonderful part of the Liturgical Calendar is that it brings to us in our worship throughout the year, the very life of Jesus Christ and his redemptive actions to be lived out in lives involving the full use of our senses and therefore lifting our souls as well.

I want to express my mahalo nui loa for those who has assisted in making the Christmas Season truly befitting for our worship and celebration. Truly without your involvement and sharing of your time, talent, and treasure we would not have had such a wonderful spiritual journey past this Christmas.

So many have assisted and so it's difficult to name without forgetting someone unintentionally so all I have done was pray for you and give thanks to God. That the Lord bless you for your part for you have blessed not only yourself but many others who truly benefited from your generosity. Mahalo nui loa and God bless you!

Have a blessed week in the Lord!

Fr. Paulo ofm cap.

## **OUR PRAYERS and CONDOLENCES**

We extend our prayers and condolences to **Mary Pat Kinsey and to the Kinsey Ohana** on the death of their daughter, **+Rachel Depue** who passed away on January 3, 2021. Eternal Rest grand unto **+Rachel** O Lord and perpetual light shine upon her. May **+Rachel's** soul and the souls of the faithful departed in the mercy of God rest in peace, Amen.

## **RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY – Lori Whitfield**

9 Days for Life 2022 Novena Prayer and Intercessory Prayers. January 12 – 22, 2022.

Please see attachments to the bulletin regarding Respect Life Ministry program for Life.

More information will follow regarding our parish program for Life.

**Lori Whitfield – Respect Life Chair**

## **LOOKING AHEAD:**

**Monday, January 10<sup>th</sup> 7am Mass**

**Tuesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> 7am Mass**

**Wednesday, January 12<sup>th</sup> 7am Mass 8**

8:30am Removing and storing of the Christmas decorations and Nativity Scene.

**Thursday, January 13<sup>th</sup> 7am mass**

**Friday, January 14<sup>th</sup> 7am Mass**

Home Visitations 9:30am – 1:pm

**Saturday, January 15<sup>th</sup> 7:00am Mass**

9:00am Faith Formation Class

10:30am House Blessings

3:30pm – 4:00pm Confessions

4:30pm Vigil Mass

**Sunday, January 16<sup>th</sup> 7am mass, 8:30am Mass & 10am Mass.**

## Scripture Reflections

### Old Testament: Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9 – 11

#### Background Context.

Our reading from prophet Isaiah – Second Isaiah (Deutero-Isaiah\*) begins not on earth but in heaven. Note in the opening verses 1 – 3, we encounter an exchange within the heavens.

“**The voices.**” Prophet Isaiah 40: **1 – 3 and 4 – 5** have always vexed some biblical scholars for centuries, they note the presence of the divine council in session in these short verses.

In both **verses 1 and 2** the **speaker is God** who commands someone to “**Comfort, give comfort to my people says your God.**” And “**Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, that her guilt is expiated.**”

Again “**My people**” is the people of Jerusalem and the speaker is also God.

In **verse 3**, “**Indeed she has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins**” the speaker changes, that is someone in the divine council cries out in response to God and issues **plural imperative (group of authoritative)**, consistent with verses 1 and 2, to a divine audience.

In **verses 9 – 11** is the presence of one who heralds-announces, he is possibility **prophet Isaiah**. He provides an optimistic tone of comfort and deliverance to Israel who foreshadows John the Baptist, for John the Baptist will embody the voice of one calling in prophet **Isaiah 40:3**, which paves the way for a Messiah to deliver all humanity.

***\*Chapters 40 -55, sometimes called the Deutero – Isaia , are generally attributed to an anonymous poet who prophesied toward the end of the Babylonian Exile. From this section come the great messianic oracles known as the sons of the Servant, whose mysterious destiny of suffering and glorification fulfilled in the passion and the glorification of Christ.***

## New Testament: Titus 2: 11-14; 3: 4-7

### Background Context.

There are few passages in the New Testament which so vividly set out the moral power of the **Incarnation** as this does from Titus. Its whole stress is the miracle of moral change which Jesus Christ can work.

This miracle of moral change is repeatedly expressed in the most interesting and significant way. **First**, there is the renunciation of all godlessness and worldly desires; **“thus to live temperately, justly and devoutly in this age.”**

What did St. Paul mean by **“worldly desires?”** *St. John Chrysostom (early Church Father who served as archbishop of Constantinople. 347- 407 A.D. He is known for his powerful preaching and persuasive words in preaching and public speaking. He is given the Greek title “chrysostomos” meaning “golden mouthed”),* he stated that **“worldly things are things which do not pass over with us into heaven but are dissolved together with this present world.”**

A man or a woman is very short- sighted if he or she sets all their hearts and expends all their labor on things which they must leave behind when they depart from this world.

Perhaps an even simpler interpretation of **“worldly desires”** mentioned in Titus is that they are for things we could not show to God. It is only Jesus Christ who can make not only our outwards life but also our inward heart fit for God to see.

The dynamic of this new life in Jesus Christ is the expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ. When a royal visit is expected everything is cleansed and decorated and made fit for the royal eye to see. We as Christian disciple should be the person who is always prepared for the coming of the King of kings. Thus, to always live with hearts pure and virtuous.

Finally, here in his letter to Titus, St. Paul goes on to sum up what Jesus Christ has done. Jesus purifies us until we are fit to be the special people of God – heirs and children of God.

The word we have translated special – (**periousios** in Greek as originally written in Greek) is interesting. **“It means reserved for”**; and it was specially used for that part of the spoils of a battle which the king who had conquered set apart specially for himself. Through the work of Jesus Christ, through his redemptive action, his life, death and resurrection, the Christian becomes fit to be the special possession of God.

The moral power of the **Incarnation** is a tremendous thought. Jesus Christ not only liberated us from the penalty of the past sin; he can enable us to live the **“perfect life” a life worthy of God** within this world of space and time; and Jesus cleanse us that we become fit in the life to come to be special possession of God, to enter life of the union of the Blessed Trinity.

No wonder St. Paul hearts almost burst when he contemplated what await the Christians who hold faithfully to God, “...**What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him.**” 1 Corinthians 2:9.

*\*The third of the Pastoral Epistles (Letters) in the New Testament is addressed to a different co-worker of St. Paul and Titus is addressed as the person in charge of the developing the Church on the large Mediterranean island of Crete, a place St. Paul had never, according to the New Testament, visited.*

## **Gospel: Luke 3: 15 – 16; 21 - 22**

### **Background Context.**

In chapter **3: 1-22**, St. Luke tells us the John the Baptist’s preaching and baptizing at the Jordan. This appearance and actions of John the Baptist was causing great excitement. The impact of John the Baptist paved the way for some of “**his disciples**”\* to encounter Jesus Christ. The people from all over the country flocked to John the Baptist.

We learn from St. John’s Gospel that some men from Galilee had become his disciples, \***Andrew**, namely, and most probably \***John** and others including \***Peter’s brother of Andrew**, and \***Phillip** were in the vicinity (**John 1: 35 – 45**).

**The people were filled with expectation and asking in their hearts:** The messianic prophecies of the Old Testament were well known to the people. Someone was to come who would be their leader, their king, and their redeemer. Tragically, as subsequent events showed it was a political leader and liberator, most of the Jews were looking for currently, but the coming liberation – and redemption is to be a spiritual one.

**Whether John might be the Christ:** The Hebrew title given for some centuries past to the **One** who was to come was the **Messiah**, which means “**the Anointed,**” for he was to be king, priest and prophet, and all three of these were anointed with oil before assuming office. **The Greek word for anointed is Christos**, hence the English **Christ**, the surname given to Jesus. Some of the people thought John the Baptist might be the expected Messiah but this John the Baptist himself in strongest point- very vehemently denied.

**I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandal:** The Christ- the Messiah is much more powerful, much more important than himself. He, John the Baptist, expressed openly that he is not even worthy to be his lowly servant, even the one who should untie his sandals straps and do other menial tasks for the Christ-Messiah.

**He will baptize you:** John the Baptist's baptism was only a symbol representing the interior conversion from sin and worldliness. The baptism of the willingness and desire for repentance. The baptism which Jesus would confer on those really converted to him, would do what it signified, it would be a reality not a symbol, remission of sin and rebirth.

**The Holy Spirit:** Those receiving Christ's baptism will receive grace, the friendship, indeed to be the son and daughter - of God, heirs to God's kingdom as well as other gifts through the giving of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.

**And fire:** In the Old Testament purification of objects was by passing them through fire a ritual practice (**Numbers 31: 23**), and the presence of God was frequently surrounded by fire (**Genesis 15: 17; 3: 2**). Baptism "**with fire**" then means a thorough purification and the presence of God in the one baptized by Christ, thus purified (**Matthew 3: 14**).

**Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened:** Jesus insisted (**Matthew 3:14**) that John the Baptist should wash him with water as he washed the other sinners. Jesus had no sin to repent of, but he represented all of us sinners, therefore by his baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus in his humility sanctified the waters of the Baptism for us.

**Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove:** A vivid description of the inward reality. At the beginning of his mission of salvation for all men and women, the Messiah, in his human nature, received the fullness of divine assistance, God anointed His Servant.

**A voice came from heaven, you are my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased:** God the Father, at the same time, proclaims that this is the Messiah, the "**Servant of God,**" foretold by the **second Isaiah- Deutero Isaiah 42: 1- 7**, which we have heard in the first reading today.

That He was more than a mere human servant, that he was God as well (Son of God), was not understood by those at the Jordan River that day, but it was understood and accepted by the disciple's and their many converts from the day of Pentecost.

This fact is testified to by all there Evangelists, **St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke** who change "**Servant**" into "**Son**" when citing the words of the Father which words are quotation from **Isaiah 42:1**. St. John does not describe the baptism of Jesus but in describing John the Baptist's activity he ends with "**I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God,**" **John 1:34**.

## **Application to Life.**

The logical question that many of us may have on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is "**why did Jesus allow himself to be baptized by John the Baptist?**" The baptism of John the Baptist was one of turning away from sin and to seek the conversion of one's heart.

Jesus Christ is without sin, he obviously has no need of the baptism John the Baptist was giving, the baptism of repentance from sin.

Jesus was willing baptized not for himself who had no need to be baptized but for our sake. Jesus did so for the love of us Jesus the Son of God humble himself and by his baptism made the baptism the remission of sin and rebirth and water and the Holy Spirit.

By his entry into baptism Jesus sanctified the waters of baptism and made it for us the **“Sacrament to new life through rebirth-regeneration.”**

God the Father intended that His Only Beloved Son should humbled Himself for our salvation, **“...but because of his mercy he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewed by the Holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior...”**

The gospel proclaimed today (Luke 3: 15- 6, 21-22) makes it clear, when Jesus gets baptized, we become the beneficiaries of the graces that flowed from this humble and sacred action.

Though there are many important lessons we can reflect from the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, but there are 3 that we can focus on today.

**1.The Baptism of Jesus is rooted not in private affair between God and Himself but rather a communal action that unites – believers in hope of salvation.** St. Luke in our gospel informs us that after all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying. Jesus prayed not for himself but us, our salvation, which he will not commence after his Anointing by the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In this midst of this gathered event, **“the heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus.”** It expressed here, the hope filled expectation of Messiah that fills the hearts of all the faithful is revealed. How Abraham of old received the promised of his countless descendants to come through his faith and obedience, to the Chosen People and their struggle as the many prophets sent by God kept the hope of the Messiah alive in their midst.

Our baptism is not a private matter of ours alone, we too are part of the long story of salvation being brought forth through the faithfulness of many and we too by our faithfulness to the baptismal promises we have made, bless, and assist others too on their journey to salvation.

**2. That Jesus’ baptism perfects our faith.** That is united through the Lord’s baptism we too share with him his Mission given by the God the Father.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. The baptism of Jesus is not only of the water but one of Holy Spirit and Fire, therefore not only of repentance as John the Baptist’s but now baptism of repentance, removal of sin and new life in rebirth by Spirit and Fire.

Now through our baptism in Jesus Christ we who are Baptist are of one body of Christ the church. Each one of us are united and affect each other for the good or even for the bad. That

is why St. Paul expressed this unity to the Colossian Christian converts; **“I am suffering for you and fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to the Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church,” 1 Colossians 1:24.**

Now St. Paul is not stating that what Jesus Christ did to redeem us is not sufficient. Jesus Christ by his life, death and resurrection has completed the work of the redemption for all time. What St. Paul is stating is that we, who are members of Christ through baptism are and may still lack in so many ways.

Baptism did cleanse us of our sins and gave us rebirth, but the tendencies – inclinations to our concupiscence is still with us. God does not take our freedom to choose. We are the children of God and heirs to God’s kingdom, but we can also choose to be the son and daughter of God and fulfilled that great gift won for us by Jesus Christ at great cost or tragically reject it and walk away as though it meant nothing.

Love at its core is truly mysterious as it is attractive, it so desired because it is of God. Yet, even as love is of God love can never be imposed on another. It is true for humans that love though is sought and can be found unless it is in willingness be chosen and nurtured, love can also be stunted, decayed, and even be lost.

How may men and women can attest to this truth that someone “loved that once was thought to be found and present is now lost?”

Let us always remember that faithfulness and virtuous life we strive and live, affects not only ourselves but others who are also members of the body of Christ the church.

The love and nurturing of love of God we strive and live is never a futile or in vain, for by baptism we are members of the body of Christ the church. Never fall into the temptation of despair as the Evil One will always whisper into our ears when we seem to fall in following Jesus Christ. Jesus has established the Church as his body on earth so that each member assists one another and each member benefit from the good they do and live.

**3. Truly the Baptism of Jesus invites us to a deeper intimacy and union with the Blessed Trinity.** This is the true meaning of the beatific vision in heaven, to enter life of the Blessed Trinity, the communion of The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In our gospel today, the Father spoke, **“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased,”** the Son, took on the mission of the Father to redeem the world, by his life, death and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him and strengthen him for his Mission of redemption.

What the sacred event that took place over 2 millennia (two thousand years ago) continues to propel us on to salvation as we who are baptized daily shared the earthly life of Jesus’ redemptive earthly events. **“For just as the body is one and has many members, all the**

**members though many are one body. So, it is with Christ in one Spirit we were baptized into one body Jew or Greek, slave or free were made to drink of one Spirit,” 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13.**

When sorrow, trials and emptiness visit us, we must recall and remember that Jesus Christ is present in each of those moments in our lives and just as in our moments of joy, laughter, and success he is also present and shares fully in all of them.

Amid the Covid-19 and all its afflictions and trials and most of all in the lingering helplessness that overshadows us, how important it is that we recall who we are as baptized members of the body of Christ the church.