



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

January 9, 2011

Ron Menig, our long-time handyman at St. Mary passed away last week. His funeral was Saturday at 11:00 am. Please pray for the repose of his soul and the consolation of his family and friends. Also, the oldest priest in the Saginaw Diocese, Fr. Michael Wolf, passed away last week. Please pray for him as well. ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO THEM, O LORD; AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM. MAY THEY REST IN PEACE. AMEN. MAY THEIR SOULS AND THE SOULS OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED, THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD, REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

I wanted to offer my heartfelt gratitude for all of the Christmas wishes and gifts I received over the past several weeks. Because I spent quite a bit of that time sick in bed, I wasn't able to send cards acknowledging every one. I apologize for that. Please know that I am overwhelmed by your kindness and generosity. THANK YOU!

Today is the Baptism of the Lord, which begins the first week of Ordinary Time. It is a good day to reflect on the promises of our own baptism and give thanks for the many gifts of grace we receive through this wonderful sacrament.

Last Wednesday was the first session of the video series *Boundaries*. We had about a dozen participants and I was very pleased with the lively discussion. It's not too late to be part of this program which meets for the next several Wednesdays at 6:45 pm in St. Mary Parish Center.

This past Monday I was able to join both of our Men's Basketball Teams at His Place. This Monday, Mt. St. Joseph plays St. Mary at 6:00 pm. In an effort to remain neutral, I will sit on the sidelines and root for both sides. Come and root for your favorite team!

This week is Vocations Awareness Week. Please pray for all vocations: marriage, priesthood, religious life, and generous single life. I ask your prayers for our seminarians preparing for Holy Orders and those couples preparing for Matrimony.

As we continue moving into the New Year, let us pray to live out our baptism as generously as the Most Holy Trinity has blessed us!

Fr. David

The Faith Explained

ALL ABOUT BAPTISM

The immersion in water signifies Baptism's two main effects – purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit. Peter promised his hearers on Pentecost that by Baptism they would receive “forgiveness for your sins” and “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism forgives all sins both original and personal; and all punishment for sin. Nothing remains to impede ones entrance into heaven. Some consequences of sin remain (sickness, death, weakness of character.) There is also an inclination to sin called ‘concupiscence’ with which we struggle. However, this inclination does no harm if resisted by Christ's grace. Baptism makes the believer an adopted child of God, a sharer in God's nature, a co-heir with Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By sanctifying grace – the grace of justification – the baptized: (1) are enabled to believe in God, hope in him, and love him through the theological virtues; (2) can live according to the power of the Holy Spirit through the sanctifying gifts; (3) can grow in goodness through the moral virtues. Baptism bestows on the whole person the supernatural life. By Baptism “we are members one of another.” This Body of Christ transcends all cultures, because “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” The baptized have become “living stones.” They are a royal nation, a holy priesthood, God's own people sharing in the common priesthood of all believers. The baptized belong to Christ and have the duty to serve others in the Church and to obey Church leaders. They have a right to the sacraments, to the nourishment of God's Word, and to all the Church's spiritual helps. They also must participate in the Church's missionary activity.

The Baptism of the Lord

In all countries, when the head of a government wishes to visit another government, he sends messengers. So, John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of Christ, to announce the conditions of His reign and government.

John used symbols as well as words. The chief symbol of the washing away of sin was a cleansing by water. John had been baptizing in the Jordan, as a token of repentance, but he knew that his baptism did not regenerate or [enliven] the dead soul.

The day on which John and Jesus met in the Jordan, there awakened in John the deepest and most reverent humility. John felt the need of a Redeemer, but when Our Lord asked him to baptize Him, John was reluctant to do so. How could he baptize One Who had no sin? His refusal to baptize Jesus was recognition of His sinlessness.

The object of Jesus' baptism was the same as the object of His birth, namely to identify Himself with sinful humanity. Had not Isaiah foretold that He would be "numbered with the transgressors?" In effect, Our Lord was saying, "[Allow] this to be done; it does not seem fitting to you, but in reality, it is in complete harmony with the purpose of my coming." Christ was not being this as a private Person, but as a representative of sinful humanity though Himself without sin.

Every Israelite who came to John made a confession of his sins. It is evidence that Our Blessed Lord did not make any such confession, and John himself admitted that He had no need of it. He had no sin to repent of and no sin to be washed away. But He was identifying Himself with sinners all the same. When He went down into the river Jordan to be baptized, He made Himself one with sinners. The innocent can share the burdens of the guilty. If a husband is guilty of a crime, it is pointless to tell his wife not to worry about it, or that it is no concern of hers. It is equally absurd to say that Our Lord should not have been baptized because He had no personal guilt. If he was to be identified with humanity, so much so as to call Himself the "Son of Man," then He had to share the guilt of humanity. And this was the meaning of the baptism by John.

The baptism of Jordan was a prelude to the baptism of which He would later speak, the baptism of His Passion. Twice afterward did he refer to His baptism. The first time was when James and John asked Him if they could sit on either side of Him in His Kingdom. In answer, He asked them if they were ready to be baptized with the baptism which He was going to receive. Thus his baptism of water looked forward to His baptism of blood. The Jordan flowed into the red rivers of Calvary.

In the waters of the Jordan He was identified with sinners; in the baptism of His Death, He would bear the full burden of their guilt. In the Old Testament, the Psalmist speaks of "entering into deep water" as a symbol of suffering which is manifestly the same image. There was a fitness in describing agony and death as a kind of baptism.

The Cross must have been looming up in His thoughts now with increasing vividness. It was no afterthought in His

mind. He was temporarily immersed in the waters of the Jordan only to emerge again. So would He be immersed by the death on the Cross and the burial in the tomb, only to emerge triumphantly in the Resurrection. He had proclaimed His mission from the Father at the age of twelve; now He was preparing Himself for oblation.

The sacred humanity of Christ was the connecting link between heaven and earth. The voice from heaven which declared Him to be the Beloved Son of the Eternal Father was not announcing a new fact or a new Sonship of Our Blessed Lord. It was merely making a solemn declaration of that Sonship, which had existed from all eternity, but which was now beginning to manifest itself publicly as Mediator between God and man. The Father's good pleasure, in the original Greek, is recorded in the aorist tense, to denote the eternal act of loving contemplation with which the Father regards the Son.

The Christ Who came out of the water, as the earth had come out of the water at creation and after the Flood, as Moses and his people had come out of the waters of the Red Sea, was now glorified by the Holy Spirit appearing in the form of a Dove. The Spirit of God never appears in the figure of a Dove anywhere [except] here. The Book of Leviticus mentions offerings which were made according to the economic and social position of the giver. A man who could afford it would bring a bullock, and a poorer man would offer a lamb; but the poorest of all had the privilege of bringing doves. When the mother of Our Lord brought Him to the temple, her offering was a dove. the dove was the symbol of gentleness and peacefulness, but above all it was the type of sacrifice possible to the lowliest people. Whenever a Hebrew thought of a lamb or a dove, he immediately thought of a sacrifice for sin. Therefore, the Spirit descending on Our Lord was for them a symbol of submission to sacrifice. Christ had already united Himself symbolically with man in baptism, in anticipation of His submergence into the waters of suffering; but now He was also crowned, dedicated, and consecrated to that sacrifice through the coming of the Spirit. The waters of the Jordan united Him with men, the Spirit crowned Him and dedicated Him to sacrifice, and the Voice attested that His sacrifice would be pleasing to the Eternal Father.

The seeds of the doctrine of the Trinity which were planted in the Old Testament began here to unfold. They would become clearer as time went on: the Father, the Creator; the Son, the Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. The very words the Father spoke here, "Thou art My Son," had been prophetically addressed to the Messiah a thousand years before in the second psalm.

The baptism in the Jordan closed Our Lord's private life and began His public ministry. He had gone down into the water known to most men only as the son of Mary; He came out ready to reveal Himself as what He had been from all eternity, the Son of God. He was the Son of God in the likeness of man in all things, save sin. The Spirit was anointing Him not just for teaching, but for redeeming.

*Excerpted from: Life of Christ,
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