

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan river, he affirmed his solidarity with us sinners in a public way. He became for us “God-with-us-sinners” in the flesh. His conception, his birth, his life and work with Mary and Joseph, his struggle with human weakness, his friendship with people including his enemies, all of which proclaimed his solidarity with us sinful men and women. Jesus wished to be completely in solidarity with us and so stepped into the Jordan river with self-admitted sinners to be baptized by John.

Our baptism brings us into solidarity with Christ and with him into solidarity with all people of God. As Jesus was being baptized, he was identified and affirmed as the beloved son of God and empowered with the Holy Spirit. This is what happens at our own baptism. We are identified and affirmed as “sons of God” and empowered with the Holy Spirit to live as sons of God and to fulfill the mission entrusted to us. To be identified as “Sons of God” means to be immersed into the very likeness of God, into the mystery of God’s life and love.

In Baptism we are washed clean, given a clean garment, a lighted candle and anointed priest, prophet, and king.... all symbolizing our character....an indelible character!!! We are identified, named, chosen, and sent to be witnesses of God’s “salvation, justice and peace” for the world. Just as other nations came to know God’s salvation, justice, and peace through Israel, today the world must experience the salvation, justice and peace of God through us and our church and our church institutions!

Israel was to be the sacrament of solidarity that God intended for all people. This solidarity was to be accomplished by the establishment of justice on earth.....not merely “distributive justice”, one that metes out same measure to everyone, but a “substantive justice”, one that is attentive to “the full enhancement of human life” - one that would touch all aspects of human life, interactions and social institutions.

Today, we, God’s people, the church, the body of Christ must be and become the symbol, the sacrament of God’s salvation, justice, and peace. Justice has to do with right relationships...right ordering of all relationships. Justice is a whole network of relationships and not just “same measure to everyone.” The basis of justice for Israel was the nations covenant with God. The basis of justice for us is our covenant with God in our baptism, our immersion into God’s life and love.

Israelites were to father the fatherless, mother the motherless, welcome the strangers, feed the travelers, and show hospitality to resident aliens...not only because the outsider and the orphan deserved it, but because this was the manner in which God cared for Israel. They were to reflect the character of God.... they were to give to others what God gave them.... they were to act toward one another as God had acted toward them.

**Their justice was supposed to be justice not of humankind, but the justice of God...the practice of justice was an expression of covenantal love, God's love as well as their own. This is the kind of justice we are called to practice.... giving others what God gave us, treating others the way God has treated us, loving others the way God has loved us - "love one another as I have loved you" was the command Jesus gave his disciples!**

Jesus came to save and liberate us from sin, but he also came to liberate us from all other forms of enslavement as well: sickness, poverty, injustice, corruption, inequality, etc. Jesus, in his words and works, taught us that salvation and liberation are not simply otherworldly realities; rather, they are to shape our human experience now. He was not merely a reformer or a liberator, but the savior of the world. He came to liberate us from all binding and oppressive forces and restore us to our dignity as sons of God.

This agenda of Jesus is the mission of the church, his body. The motivation for all our efforts at justice and liberation is that we are one body; we share one baptism; we are all given to drink of the same Spirit; we, though many, are one; we, though with different social status, different ethnicity, different gifts, different functions, are all one body in Christ. It is this very oneness that must move us to action because when one of the members of the body of Christ suffers, all are affected. Therefore, each of us is responsible for the freedom and dignity of all of us.

The 13th century king of France, St. Louis IX (1226-1270), insisted that the grand celebration of his birthday should be held on the day of his Baptism, and not on his actual birthday. He believed that Baptism was the beginning of a life that would continue for eternity in the everlasting glory of Heaven. Let us remember that our own baptism was the beginning of our life as beloved children of God and renew our Baptismal promises, consecrating ourselves to the Holy Trinity and rejecting sin and evil forces. Let us pray for the Grace of God to help us be faithful to our Baptismal promises and thank God for the honor and the privilege of being His beloved children.

I encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to reflect on being baptized into Christ, on how you have been living your baptismal commitments and how you have been witnessing Christ as you went about doing your daily chores.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today's mass....**

# Baptism of the Lord

January 12, 2025

**Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,  
but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.  
Let each of you look not only to his own interests,  
but also to the interests of others.  
(Philippians 2:3-4)**

## Collect

Almighty ever-living God,  
who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan  
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,  
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,  
grant that your children by adoption,  
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,  
may always be well pleasing to you.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

## Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**We are created, ordained, baptized  
and anointed as sons of God to image God.**

## Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

This excerpt is one of Isaiah's servant songs which describe the character of the Servant of God who brings forth truth and justice gently and peacefully and without violence. In it the prophet offered a vision of the identity of Israel as a nation through which God's loving care and saving power would be revealed to all nations. Israel was to be the symbol of unity and strength, harmony and peace, justice and the mercy of God. Through the servant Israel God's justice, mercy and salvation would be revealed to all nations.

**Jesus is the gentle servant of justice, mercy and salvation. We who follow him must continue his mission of revealing God's justice, mercy and salvation for all.**

## **Psalm 29**

Psalm 29 is a hymn inviting members of the heavenly court to acknowledge God's supremacy by ascribing glory and might to God alone. Divine glory and might are dramatically visible in the storm. The storm apparently comes from the Mediterranean onto the coast of Syria-Palestine and then moves inland. The psalm concludes with a prayer that God will impart the power just displayed to the Israelite king.

**Give to the Lord, you sons of God,  
Give to the Lord Glory and Praise,  
Give to the Lord the Glory due his name,  
Adore the Lord in holy attire.**

## **Acts 10:34-38**

Peter told the community that he had come to know God as impartial and that anyone who fears God and lives upright lives is acceptable to God. This excerpt tells us that Peter spoke to the community from the house of Cornelius. This itself is a sign of the change of Peter's attitude. Peter had come to know and accept Cornelius and his household while giving up his old attitudes toward the gentiles.

**We are invited to change our attitudes toward people of other cultures and nations and religions and give witness to our solidarity with them and commit ourselves to the well-being of all people.**

## **Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

The disciples of John the Baptist wanted to know whether he was the messiah they were waiting for. John made it clear to them that he was not even worthy to untie the sandal straps of the Messiah. He saw his mission as preparing the way of the Messiah. He called people to conversion and to wait for the good news. He announced the coming of someone who will baptize with water and the Holy Spirit.

**John the Baptist inspires us to be humble, and be at the service of others in serving God. He calls us to give God first place, to seek God's honor. He calls us to point to Christ, to draw people to Christ rather than to our own self.**

Jesus came to John to be baptized and John recognized him as the one for whom he was preparing the way. As Jesus was being baptized John saw the spirit rest on him and heard the assurance that Jesus was the beloved Son of God.

**Pray that you may have the gift of recognizing Jesus as he reveals himself through the many events, situations and people in your life.**

When Jesus was baptized, he was Identified and affirmed as the beloved son of God and empowered with the Holy Spirit. This is what happens at our own baptism. We are identified and affirmed as “sons of God” and empowered with the Holy Spirit to live as sons of God and to fulfill the mission entrusted to us. To be identified as “Sons of God” means to be immersed into the very likeness of God. “Like father, like son” is an old expression indicating that the son has the characteristics of the father. This is what it means to be sons of God....to be immersed into the character of God, to be identified with the image of God, to be named to image God.

**Pray that you may be gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to image God and to fulfill the mission God has given to you.**

**Be Still for a few moments!**

**Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.**

## **Spiritual Communion**

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

**Be Still for a few moments!**

**Saint of the day, January 12 - Saint Marguerite Bourgeoy and 25 other saints are remembered this day.**

Marguerite Bourgeoys, was born, sixth of 12 children in Troyes, France on April 17, 1620. At the age of 20, she believed that she was called to religious life. Her applications to the Carmelites and Poor Clares were unsuccessful. A priest friend suggested that perhaps God had other plans for her.

In 1654, the governor of the French settlement in Canada visited his sister, an Augustinian canoness in Troyes. Marguerite belonged to a sodality connected to that convent. The governor invited her to come to Canada and start a school in Ville-Marie (eventually the city of Montreal). When she arrived, the colony numbered 200 people with a hospital and a Jesuit mission chapel.

Soon after starting a school, she realized her need for coworkers. Returning to Troyes, she recruited a friend, Catherine Crolo, and two other young women. In 1667, they added classes at their school for Indian children. A second trip to France three years later resulted in six more young women and a letter from King Louis XIV, authorizing the school. The Congregation of Notre Dame was established in 1676 but its members did not make formal religious profession until 1698 when their Rule and constitutions were approved. Marguerite established a school for Indian girls in Montreal. At the age of 69, she walked from Montreal to Quebec in response to the bishop's request to establish a community of her sisters in that city.

Marguerite survived many threats in the twenty-six years she had been in wilderness of Canada. She had lived through Iroquois attacks, a fire that destroyed her small village, plagues on the ships that she took back and forth to France, but nothing threatened her dreams and hopes more than what her own bishop said to her in 1679. He told her that she had to join her Congregation of Notre Dame with its teaching sisters to a cloistered religious order of Ursulines.

Marguerite was not ready to surrender to the bishop. There was too much at stake. She reminded him that the Ursulines, because they were cloistered, could not go out and teach, as her Sisters had done. The poor and uneducated would not and could not travel to a Quebec cloister over miles of frontier at the risk of their lives. But her Sisters were more than willing to live in huts in order to fulfill their call from God. She had set up schools all over the territory, not just for children. How could they do the work for God that they had done so well in a cloister?

The bishop replied, "I cannot doubt, Mother Bourgeoys, that you will succeed in moving heaven and earth as you have moved me!" The Congregation remained an active teaching order, one of the very first of its kind for women. Their rule had to go through one more attempt at turning them into a cloister but Marguerite lived to see the triumph when their Rule was made official in 1698. She died on January 12, 1700 in Montreal. She was canonized in 1982 by Pope John Paul II.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**We are called to live our baptism every day,  
as new creatures, clothed in Christ.  
(Pope Francis)**

