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**Baptism of the Lord**

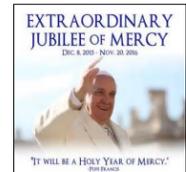
"After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened." What a treat to be in that crowd! Just imagine the experience of witnessing this manifestation of divinity! To SEE the Holy Spirit "in bodily form like a dove" and to hear the voice that "came from heaven" announcing Jesus' true identity. Don't we all long for this kind of miraculous clarity? Wouldn't it do wonders for our faith if we had such unmistakable certainty about who Jesus really is?

It's easy to imagine that the first Christians had it easier than we do. They got to be with Jesus in person, and to witness the miracles that went along with his years on earth. Because of this, we can quickly forget the benefits we enjoy that they did not. We live on the other side of the Resurrection, for example. The first followers of Christ believed in him BEFORE he rose from the dead. We, on the other hand, have the confidence of knowing that this man literally conquered death. We also have two millennia of Christian witness through the saints to pull upon. The first Christians had no idea what this new religion would produce, how many people would embrace it, or how it would change the world for the better. We know that Christianity has been fruitful beyond measure.



Today's Gospel informs us that it was only after they were baptized that the people witnessed the opening of heaven. Even Jesus himself was baptized before he heard this earthly confirmation of his heavenly origin. We who have been baptized, following the example of Christ, also have "access" to the voice of God. In the silence of our hearts, and through God's word in the Bible (another advantage we enjoy), heaven is "opened" for us as well.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus spoke well of this mystery when he preached: "Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him." (CCC 537) St. Hilary of Poitiers expressed, more poetically, our adoption as true sons and daughters of God in baptism: "Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God." (CCC 537)



**The Jubilee Year of Mercy : In response to our Bishop's request, St. Ann's will have a Prayer Hour for Mercy with Eucharistic Adoration every Monday evening at 7:00 p.m., beginning Monday, December 14.**

The Sacrament of Confession will be available during that time until 7:55 p.m. when we will have Benediction. In addition, Confession will be available before each weekday Mass from 9:00 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. Tuesday to Friday beginning Tuesday December 8. Confessions on Saturday will be increased: the Sacrament will be available from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. beginning Saturday December 12, in addition to the usual 4:00 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. It is my hope that this Year of Mercy will be a time of increased prayer and increased reception of the Sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist, so that we may grow much closer to Our Lord Jesus Christ and better appreciate and put into practice the great love and mercy He shows us.

**Living Faith**—provides daily reflections based on a Scripture passage from the daily Mass. With readings for daily Mass listed at the bottom of each devotion, this booklet helps Catholics pray and meditate in spirit with the seasons of the Church Year. Copies are available at the back of the church. Please help yourself.

We will be taking down Christmas decorations on **Monday, January 11th**. If you can help, we will meet at 9:30am. Thank you.

**Thank you to everyone who attended the meeting this past week** regarding the parish discernment process. Your input and thoughts were much appreciated. We will keep you informed of future developments with this diocesan initiative.

**Baptism of the Lord**

At first glance, the Baptism of the Lord might seem an odd feast. Since the Catholic Church teaches that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for the remission of sins, particularly Original Sin, why was Christ baptized? After all, He was born without Original Sin, and He lived His entire life without sinning. Therefore, He had no need of the sacrament, as we do.

In submitting Himself humbly to the baptism of St. John the Baptist, however, Christ provided the example for the rest of us. If even He should be baptized, though He had no need of it, how much more should the rest of us be thankful for this sacrament, which frees us from the darkness of sin and incorporates us into the Church, the life of Christ on earth! His Baptism, therefore, was necessary--not for Him, but for us.

Many of the Fathers of the Church, as well as the medieval Scholastics, saw Christ's Baptism as the institution of the sacrament. His Flesh blessed the water, and the descent of the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) and the voice of God the Father announcing that this was His Son, in Whom He was well pleased, marked the beginning of Christ's public ministry.

"Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan . (Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22). The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son.'(Mt 3:13-17) This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God." (CCC 535)

St. Gregory of Nazianzus spoke well of this mystery when he preached: "Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him." (CCC 537) St. Hilary of Poitiers expressed, more poetically, our adoption as true sons and daughters of God in baptism:

"Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God." (CCC 537)

The greatest of gifts is ours in baptism: God's very own life and love. A life to overcome the death which is our inheritance from Adam's sin, a love to overpower and win us away from love of self to love of God for his own sake and our neighbors for his glory.

Another of the baptismal gifts we receive is the ability, in Christ, to praise and worship the Father in the Holy Spirit, and to be found pleasing to God as we do so. The baptismal font was often placed in the courtyard or near the entrance of early churches, and the practice continues so in many places today. We "entered" the Body of Christ at the moment of our baptism. We became worshipping members of the Son, pleasing and beloved by the Father, through our baptism. This is why holy water fonts are placed near the entrance of our churches.

As you dip your fingers into the font and make the sign of the cross each time you enter the His house to worship the Lord, remember it is by the power of your baptism that you render fitting and pleasing worship to God in your spiritual sacrifice of holiness of life and, most fully, the Eucharistic sacrifice. It is by your bath in the waters flowing from the side of Christ the High Priest in his one, perfect offering on the cross that you have been incorporated into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic body of Christ in the world, his bride the Church.

**Parish Calendar**

- Jan 17th.... Week of prayer for Christian Unity
- Jan 19th.... Tuesday Bingo resumes
- Jan 20th .... School Mass 9:30am
- Jan 20th.... Finance Meeting 7pm

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity- Jan 17-24**

This universal week of prayer encourages Christians of all denominations to meet, participate in various liturgical and other community activities and to pray together that all may be one, a Christ desires. **Theme for 2016:**"Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord"(1 Peter 2:9) At least once a year, Christians are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples that "they may be one so that the world may believe" (see John 17.21). Hearts are touched and Christians come together to pray for their unity. Congregations and parishes all over the world exchange preachers or arrange special ecumenical celebrations and prayer services. The event that touches off this special experience is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

**2016 Offertory Envelopes**

**2016 Offertory Envelopes:** are available in the church hall. **If you do not find a box prepared for you, please phone the office. As we begin a new year, A few requests regarding envelope use:**

Please note that there have been updates made to the offertory numbering system. **FOR THE YEAR 2016, PLEASE USE ONLY THE ENVELOPES ASSIGNED TO YOU FOR THAT YEAR.** Some numbers are re-assigned every year and if you use old envelopes someone else may get credit for your contribution. **It is best to destroy all old envelopes.** A reminder that if you forget your envelope at home, there are visitor envelopes at the church entrance you can use - don't forget to include your name and address on them.

- If you are making up for a missed week, **it is not necessary** to use more than one envelope. Use only the envelope for the week you are attending.
- It is always helpful for us if you mark the amount of your donation on the envelope, however this is not required.
- If you are using a lot of coin for your contribution, we suggest that you tape the envelope well as loose change falls out easily.
- For any donations by cheque, please make payable to St. Ann Parish, **including all special collections. Take extra care with the date for the new year.**
- **PLEASE ADVISE THE OFFICE IF YOUR ADDRESS OR OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION HAS CHANGED.**
- If you do not use envelopes but would like to, contact the office and we will prepare a box for you.

**Catholic Education: Open House and registration for 2016.**

**Sunday, January 10th, 2016  
 The Baptism of the Lord**

*"I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." — Lk 3:16bc*

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

Sat. Jan 9	9-10am	Reconciliation
	4-4:45pm	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Reconciliation
	5:00pm	Missa Pro Populo
Sun. Jan 10	9:30am	Intention Available
	11:00am	✠ Georgina Anthony (Stephanie Anthony)
Mon. Jan 11	7:00pm	Holy Hour & Reconciliation
Tues. Jan 12	9:30am	✠ Julia Counce (Mary & Jim Smith)
Wed. Jan 13	9:30am	✠ Roy Culp (Gloria Egert)
Thurs. Jan 14	9:30am	✠ Mary Daly (Helena Van Liefland)
Fri. Jan 15	9:30am	✠ Adrian Voogt (Voogt & Green Families)
Sat. Jan. 16	9-10am	Reconciliation
	4-4:45pm	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Reconciliation
	5:00pm	✠ Marko Kotar (Family)
Sun. Jan. 17	9:30am	Missa Pro Populo
	11:00am	✠ Dr. Gordon Fulcher (Mike & Rosemary Hunter)

**Reconciliation from 9-9:20am before all weekday masses. Offertory January 1st 2016**

37 Envelopes	\$ 883.00
Loose Collection	\$ 33.25
Total Offertory	\$ 916.25
Initial Offering (20 Envelopes)	\$ 223.00

**Offertory January 2nd & 3rd, 2016**

87 Envelopes	\$1,769.85
Loose Collection	\$ 163.00
Total Offertory	\$1,933.85
Initial Offering	\$ 120.75
Jan. 1st Collection	\$ 32.65
Maintenance	\$ 120.00



**Tuesday Bingo:** Will resume on **January 19th, 2016**. If you would like to help with this fundraiser, please phone the office as schedules for the January-June session will be prepared soon.