

**For The Bulletin Of
January 10, 2016**

**THE FEAST OF THE
BAPTISM OF THE LORD –
THE CONCLUSION OF THE
CHRISTMAS SEASON**

From Father Robert

Eighteenth century English poet Alexander Pope once remarked that if we expect nothing, we shall never be disappointed. Such a low bar we might set for ourselves! Yes, great expectations might disappoint by blinding us to the good already in front of us, or leading us to future failure. Yet, it is better to risk disappointment than be struck with nothing to look forward to, nothing to excite us, nothing to increase our hope. Expectations spur us on to remarkable achievement; urge us to seek excellence with greater diligence; push us to the kind of creativeness that opens the door for something new to happen, for discovering new possibilities, for embracing the unknown.

The people in the gospel looked to John the Baptist to be the long awaited Messiah. It was precisely their expectation – misdirected though it was – that kept them looking for the Messiah. John redirected them from himself to the person of Jesus, the “beloved Son” of God. Our own baptism with “the Holy Spirit and fire” initiates us on a journey of discovery not only of Who Jesus is, but also who we are in Him. Today’s gospel, then, teaches us something about John, Jesus, and ourselves.

Who was John the Baptist? He was set apart, prophetic, radical, clear about his

message of repentance, sure about his identity as the herald of One Who would be greater than he. Who is Jesus? He is the Messiah to Whom John pointed, the “beloved Son” of God, the One Who, because of His own prophetic, radical and sure message would be misunderstood, rejected, ridiculed, deserted, crucified. Who are we? We are those who, through our baptism “with the Holy Spirit and with fire,” are conformed to Jesus and take up His saving mission. From His baptism by John to His crucifixion, the Messiah did not meet mere human expectations. Rather, He exceeded them with His Good News, His healing, His love. From our own baptism to our death, we also must not meet mere human expectations. Rather, we must achieve the full potential of our own graced identity as God’s own people expressed through a Gospel way of living.

Living The Paschal Mystery

Being baptized by “the Holy Spirit and fire” means that we share in Jesus’ mission, including the total gift of ourselves. Who we are manifests God’s Presence in the very dying to self we do each day as we conform ourselves to God’s will. We learn our mission from experiencing and encountering the Divine through others. Our Christian journey is about realizing that *we ourselves* are God’s Presence for another. We must constantly redirect our own expectations so that we keep focused on the One “mightier than I” who comes to others, now, through us.

The gift of divine Life and its attendant call to self-giving discipleship does make demands on us. Taking our baptism seriously means that the ritual moment is just the beginning of a

lifetime of openness to God's continuing grace "training" us to be faithful to who God calls us to be. God's giving us a share in divinity is so gracious that the only response is self-giving in faithfulness to our baptismal call. While our baptismal living manifests dying for the sake of others, it also manifests a hope that is sure because God's ultimate gracious gift of everlasting Life is a promise already being fulfilled.

What questions does today's scriptures raise for you? As we bring the Christmas Season to a close with today's feast, how will you keep the Light and Love of Christmas alive in your heart and life?

- Each day, my expectations include...They become misdirected when...Jesus redirects them by...
- Having been baptized "with the Holy Spirit and fire" means to me...
- On my journey of discovering Who Jesus is, I have learned...of discovering who I am, I have learned...
- I will keep the Spirit and Love of the Christmas Season alive in my heart and life by...

About Liturgy: Symbols of Baptism

The symbols of the baptismal rite put into focus the primary gift of baptism – a share in divine Life which is for us a new identity.

Water – plunged into the baptismal waters, we are plunged into Christ's death; rising, we share in divine Life. Water brings both death to our old selves and a rebirth of life (new Life in God).

Chrism – anointed with chrism, we share in the threefold office of Christ – priest, prophet, king. Our being anointed with chrism is a consecration of ourselves to conform our life to Christ's.

White Garment – clothed in a white garment, we are reminded of our new, holy risen Life in Christ. We are to live unstained until we enjoy eternal Life with God.

Lighted Candle – enlightened by Christ, we are also to be the light of Christ dispelling sin and darkness in the world. We ourselves are manifestations that in Christ the light of salvation has come into the world.

Although all of these symbols also imply the demands of discipleship (*water* – dying to self; *chrism* – conforming ourselves to Christ; *white garment* – living lives worthy of who we are; *lighted candle* – overcoming the darkness of evil), they primarily help us understand who we become in baptism members of the Body of Christ sharing in divine identity. Moreover, greater awareness and appreciation of our identity enables us to be more faithful in our discipleship.

Environment Help

Tomorrow morning, Monday, January 11th, at 9:00 a.m., we will begin the process of transforming the environment from that of Christmas to Winter's Ordinary Time. It took many "hands" to create the Christmas environment and it will take many to remove it and create an environment that is appropriate and prayerful for this brief season that will lead us into Lent. Winter's Ordinary Time this year is the shortest it can ever be – only three weeks

and two days! You are invited to join us and be a part of this wonderful work and ministry which takes place “behind the scenes” but which is seen and experienced by everyone who celebrates Liturgy with us.

First Reconciliation

This Friday evening, January 15th at 6:00 pm, the children in our Sacramental Preparation Program will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. Please keep them in your prayers as they take this next important step in their faith journey as they encounter the Lord’s forgiveness, love, and mercy.

Adult Confirmation

The Sacrament of Adult Confirmation will be celebrated at The Cathedral this Saturday morning, January 16th, at 10:00 a.m. Please keep the candidates in your prayers as they prepare to complete their Initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Knights of Columbus Dinner

This Saturday evening, January 16th, our Knights of Columbus are hosting a Dinner in the parish hall for all those men who are interested in becoming Knights of Columbus. This is a fraternal organization of men in our parish who are involved in many ministries and outreaches and who are a vital part of our parish’s life and ministry. If you are not a Knight of Columbus, I invite you to join us for this evening of fellowship and information. Find out how you can become a part of the largest fraternal organization in the world and join our parish council in the wonderful work they do. Please see the bulletin for more details.

Retirement Celebration for Bev Iacona

Next Sunday, January 17th, we will celebrate the retirement of **Bev Iacona** who has been on the Pastoral Staff and served most recently as Financial Secretary. Bev is one of the Charter Members of the parish, its first Faith Formation Director, and has served in practically every ministry of the parish since its inception. We owe her great gratitude for the place she has held in developing our parish, its ministries, programs, and outreaches and serving in so many capacities. We will thank her for all her years of service during the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist followed by a reception in the parish hall. I hope you will join us for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate Bev and all she has done. She will continue to be involved in ministry in new ways as she transitions from being a member of the Pastoral Staff.

At the same time, I wish to announce that **Estrella Rusk** has been appointed as the new Financial Secretary and she began her new position on January 1st. We welcome Estrella to the Pastoral Staff and look forward to many years of ministry and service with us.

Annual Report and Presentation of the Budget for 2016

As required by Diocesan Statute, The Annual Report and Presentation of the Budget for 2016 will take place at each liturgy the weekend of January 30th and 31st. Hard copies of the report will be made available to all our parishioners. I hope you will plan to be with us that weekend as we reflect on 2015 and look ahead to 2016.

The Rectory

On New Year's Eve, right around 3:00 p.m., the rectory was broken into and ransacked for the second time in eleven years. I left the house at 2:50 p.m. to prepare for the Vigil Mass and at 2:54 the alarm was triggered. Antioch Police arrived at 3:08 p.m. and found the front door wide open. They entered the house to find that the back sliding door in the Family Room had been shattered and whomever broke in had gone through every drawer, cupboard, and closet. They kicked out boards on the fence on the hill above the rectory and came down the hill, through the yard, and through the sliding glass door. When the glass broke, it shattered in many, many pieces and was found in every room of the house. Some of it was carried on the bottom of their shoes as they went from room to room. The police were waiting for me when the Mass was finished and walked me through the house, room-by-room, to determine what had been taken. What continues to be mysterious, is that as far as we can tell, nothing was taken. They did take a watch in the case it was given to me and the police found it on the floor near the front door which they must have dropped or left behind as they fled the house. It is from that they were able to get a partial print which we hope will be sufficient to identify who is responsible.

This was a very traumatic experience and brought back the memories of the first break-in eleven years ago. I am deeply grateful to **Rich Confetti, Don Benson, and Frank and Monika Kauer** who stayed with me and helped to clean up the mess and all the broken glass. That morning we had just steam-cleaned all of the travertine flooring, all of the carpets, and thoroughly cleaned

the house. The police believe that I was being watched because the break-in occurred so closely after I had left the house for the church.

In a meeting with **Brian McCoy, Our Administrator, Rich Confetti, and Don Benson**, we are moving forward, at the recommendation of the Antioch Police, to install an external alarm speaker, an external alarm light, and external cameras on the outside of the house for additional protection. We hope to have this work done very quickly. By the time you are reading my Insert, the sliding glass door will have been repaired. Because it is made of tempered safety glass, it had to be special ordered and took four days to arrive.

I am deeply grateful to all those who have been so supportive, who sent notes, emails, and phone calls to make sure that I am alright. I have forgiven whomever is responsible and I refuse to be a victim. This has happened to many of our parishioners as well, and so many of you understand what it is like to go through something like this. And while it is traumatizing at the time, we clean up, pick up, and move forward, not allowing me or anyone else to live in fear. I do hope that the partial fingerprints that were taken will be able to identify the person or persons responsible and that they will be brought to justice. And, I am sure that the rectory is not the only home that they have broken into and burglarized. Let's hope they are apprehended and stopped from doing this to anyone else.

Thank You

...to those who helped clean the church on December 23rd in preparation for Christmas liturgies: **Steve Rojek, Mency Osborne, Angela Bueno, and Rose Salamanca.**

...to **Robert Goncalves** who cleaned all the bathrooms on December 23rd in preparation for Christmas.

...to those who cleaned the church and parish hall on Saturday, December 26th: **Jun Bajet, Angela Bueno, Mency Osborne, and Steve Rojek.**

...to those who cleaned the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall on Saturday, December 26th: **Robert Goncalves, Gino Ramos, Geri Abaya, and Mary Ewing.**

...to **Carole Miller** who stuffed the bulletin for Holy Family Sunday and also has cared for and watered all the poinsettias during the Christmas Season.

...to the parishioners who joined me for the Monthly Antioch Neighborhood Clean Up, sponsored by our Antioch Police Department and our Volunteers in Police Service: **Tracy Wetzel, Kelly Wetzel, Paul Burgarino, and Joanna Burgarino.**

...to **Dilcia Aparacio** who did such a great job of keeping up with all the Sacred Linens during the Christmas Season, washing and ironing, and transporting them back and forth between her home and the Sacristy.

...to those who cleaned the church on Saturday, January 2, 2016: **Angela Bueno, Steve Rojek, Mency Osborne, and Carole Miller.**

...to those who cleaned and maintained the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall since last Saturday: **Robert Goncalves, Gino Ramos, Harlan Young, Patricia Britton, and Steve Rojek.**

...to those who made our Epiphany liturgies so wonderful by serving as “Kings” and “Starbearers”: **Gino Ramos, Louis Renner, Kirby McNesby, Terry McNesby, Robert Goncalves, Jack Goncalves, Rick Howell, and Peter Degl’Innocenti.**