



## THE SECOND SUNDAY IN WINTER'S ORDINARY TIME

### *From Father Robert*

Most children love magicians, they love to see them perform at birthday parties, events, and special shows. Magicians sometimes say they are more properly called “illusionists,” because that title more closely reflects what they actually do. They perform illusions rather than magic. We might say they are creating the illusion of magic. We think we see something, maybe a rabbit pulled from a hat or a card that disappears, but it is only an illusion.

In reading today’s gospel from John, we may think Jesus is baptized. But when we look at the story more carefully, we see that there’s no baptism at all. The story is about John the Baptist, but his role is not to baptize Jesus. Instead, it is to testify to Jesus – a testament that, namely, Jesus is the Son of God. This title is significant for the Gospel of John, and it appears in the closing verse of the gospel (prior to the epilogue): “These things are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His name.” (20:31)

So what John the Baptist testifies to in the beginning, that Jesus is the Son of God, is

the entire purpose of the gospel. And all of this is done without Jesus being baptized. We would need the other gospels to learn that Jesus was indeed baptized by John. This gospel gracefully omits that detail.

In addition to this narrative sleight of hand, the Gospel of John also claims that Jesus “existed before” John the Baptist. The prologue makes this clear in identifying the Word of God in the beginning, and that the Word was made flesh. But here we have pre-existence on the lips of the Baptist himself. No other gospel is quite so explicit about this theological point. And the Baptist continues by saying the only reason he was baptizing at all was to give testimony to this one who “might be made known to Israel.” When we read the Gospel of John, let’s pay special attention to the words he uses and the theological claims he makes. Otherwise, we might miss the essential truth and mistake it with a glance of an illusion. We are so familiar with these stories and the gospels, we can see what we already “know” and miss a deeper insight.



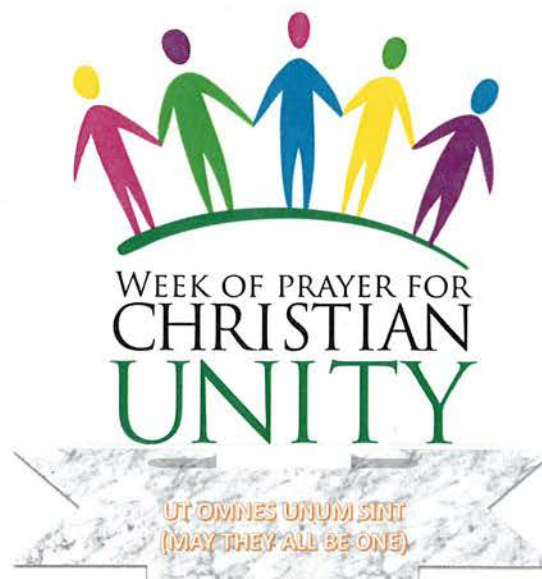
### *Living The Paschal Mystery*

St. Paul tells us that we have been baptized into Christ’s death. Mark speaks of John’s baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, which Jesus also underwent. But John the Baptist appears in the Fourth Gospel not to baptize Jesus, but to testify to Him. Baptism, this foundational sacrament of water, has a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations in the New Testament and

also for us today. When we dip our fingers into the holy water at church, we are reminded that we have been baptized into Christ's death, with the forgiveness of sins. Then we, as His followers, are to testify to Him in the world. Our belief in Jesus as the Son of God gives life in His name. We live this life having undergone the paschal mystery in our own baptism from death to new life.

Once again, we have entered into Winter's Ordinary Time following the Season of Christmas. While Lent, Advent, Christmas, and Easter all have their own themes and practices, sometimes Ordinary Time can seem, well, "ordinary." How would you like to keep this time of living and growing in faith?

Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God tells the people of Israel, "I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth." Where is light most needed now in the world? How might the church seek to be this light in darkness? The psalmist sings, "I have waited, waited for the Lord." Patience is a difficult spiritual virtue to cultivate. How do you "wait on the Lord" and what practices help you in times where patience is required? In his greeting to the church in Corinth, St. Paul reminds the people that they have been sanctified and called to holiness. Who models holiness for you in everyday life?



During the octave of days between January 18 and 25, the worldwide church each year marks a week of prayer for Christian Unity. Pope Benedict XV made this practice, first observed in 1908 by a small group of Roman Catholics and Episcopalians a universal observance in the Roman Catholic Church in 1916. Since then the church has encouraged Christians around the world to observe this week in prayer for visible unity among all Christians. Let us continue to pray for increased dialogue and work toward unity among all Christians. There is more that unites us than that which divides us. And let us never forget Jesus' prayer that "they may all be one in Me as I am in You."



An Evening of Reflection on the Liturgical Significance of Winter's Ordinary Time will be held on Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, at

7:30 p.m. in the parish hall. This is for everyone in the parish: members of the assembly, lectors, eucharistic ministers, ushers, greeters, altar servers, adult acolytes, sacristans, choir members, cantors, all who have a part in worship. The evening will include fellowship, prayer, singing, a brief presentation, and small group discussion. What is Winter's Ordinary Time? What is its significance? How will we make it a time of personal and corporate growth in our parish community? What do I need to do personally to enrich my faith journey? How will I use this brief season to grow in my understanding of what it means to be a missionary disciple?



Each year the Pastor is required by the Diocese to give an annual state-of-the-parish report. The report looks back over the previous calendar year and marks significant moments in the life of the parish. It also gives a financial accounting of the parish's financial resources, the previous year's budget, how well that budget was met, as well as presents the budget for the new year. It presents statistics for the parish's sacramental life: the number of baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, weddings, Sick Calls, and Funerals. And finally, it presents the goals and objectives for the coming new year. This year's Annual Pastoral and Financial Report will be printed in hard copy and distributed at each liturgy on the weekend of January 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. I hope you will plan to be present with us for this important report.



### *The Parish Hall and Kitchen Expansion Project*

I am overwhelmed at the progress we have made with our Expansion Project Fundraising Effort and the gifts and pledges which 158 families have made to help us close the shortfall regarding the funding necessary to go forward with the expansion of the parish hall and the building of a health department compliant kitchen. In 4 short weeks, we have raised 63% of the goal. In two weeks, the members of the Expansion Committee will join me for a meeting at the Diocese to present our project and seek approval to begin construction. Our presentation will include an overview of the project, the history leading up to this moment, documentation from our architect and contractor, and the plan for going forward. The meeting at the Diocese will take place on Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup>. I ask for your prayers for the success of this meeting. After we have met with the Diocesan Officers, they will present our request to the Bishop and the Consultors for their approval. Once they have approved the project, we will then be able to go forward with construction which will take approximately 6 months. There is still time for anyone who has not yet made a gift or pledge to our project to do so. Pledge/Gift Forms are available from the parish office or are available on the Credenza at the rear of the church. Thank you again to all those who have participated thus far.



On behalf of all of us, I wish to thank once again all those who do so much volunteering for our parish: those who arrive early each Saturday morning to clean both the church and parish hall: **Jean Rogers, Adaugo Nnaji, Jun Bajet, Carole Miller, Nancy Santos, Mency Osborne, Al Cosce, and Steve Rojek.**

...those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall throughout the week: **Finian Anyanwu, Alfred Madoshi, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Fr. Robert.**

...the members of our Art & Environment Committee and parishioners who came last Monday to remove the Christmas environment and install the environment for these next 7 weeks of Winter's Ordinary Time: **Rich & Pam Confetti, Don Benson, Tony & Claudia Gumina, Tom & Stevie Catchings, Carole Miller, Lorraine Lohmeier, Nancy Santos, Janet Roque, Pat McConnell, Shelli Daviess, Teresa Glenn, Gus Garcia, Kristine Shoemaker, Peter Degl'Innocenti, Sue Taver, Dave Simpson, Ramona Baxter, Moose Cosce, Carmen Mayne, Jo Simoncini, Jean Rogers, and Kathleen Maasberg.**

...to **Dilcia Aparicio** who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.

...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:

**Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Adora Pesapane, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.**

...to our counting teams who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:

**Frances Rojek, Mel Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Estrella Rusk, Alicia Perez, Bev Iacona, and Paul Riofski.**

...to our St. Vincent de Paul volunteer who transported last week's donations: **Frank Zamora.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Dave Costanza (Lead), Carole Miller, Kathy Augusta and Vince Augusta.**

...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keep watch over our vehicles during the weekend Liturgies: **Don Benson, Steve Rojek, and Tony Gumina.**



January 20, 2020

Dear Father Rien,

This is to thank you for the wonderful liturgy you lead for the Catholic Daughter's of the Americas Annual Memorial Eucharist on Saturday November 16, 2019.

Your enthusiasm for the liturgy and its ritual resulted in the best Memorial Liturgy we have celebrated for our deceased sisters in Christ.

Regent Sylvia Soliz, who was wise to contact you, gave you all the credit for the liturgy, the worship leaflet, the recruitment of your Music Minister and Choir, the Knights of Columbus, and St. Martha's Guild Members. We extend our gratitude to them through you and will long remember their contribution to the day's celebration. You have set the bar high and we will strive in the future to honor our sisters in a like manner.

May God bless you in 2020 with all the blessings you so richly deserve.

With gratitude and respect,

*Nita Volker*

Nita Volker, Moderator, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, The Diocese of Oakland

