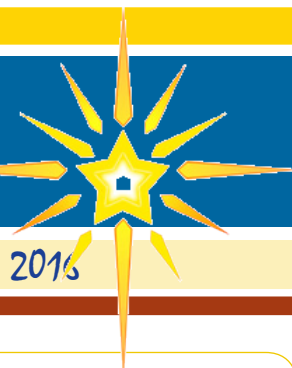


He will baptize you with
the Holy Spirit and fire!

The Baptism of the Lord



San Ignacio de Loyola Parish

January 10, 2016

REFLECTION ON THE WORD

The people in today's 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” initiated us on a journey of discovery not only of who Jesus is, but also who we are in him. This gospel, then, teaches us something about John, Jesus and ourselves.

Who are we? We are those who, through our baptism “with the Holy Spirit and fire”, are conformed to Jesus and take up his saving mission. From his baptism by John to his crucifixion, the Messiah did not meet 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.

Words to reflect upon: a Gospel way of living

Tomorrow, January 11th, is the 14th anniversary of the opening of the Guantanamo Bay prison camp in Cuba.

*O Radiant Dawn, God of mercy and justice,
splendor of eternal light, Sun of Justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness
and in the shadow of death.*

Living the Grace of the Incarnation

Baptism inaugurates us into the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. It inaugurates us into his way of life, one totally taken up with bringing healing and freedom (Isaiah 42) to all those we meet in our daily living.

This dying and rising is the “stuff” of our Christian living. What enables us to continue to say yes to such living is that we know the dying always leads to rising; death always brings Life. We know this with certainty because Jesus was baptized, his identity as beloved Son was revealed, he was faithful to his mission to bring forgiveness and justice, and he died and then rose. The pattern of Jesus' life is the pattern of our own lives.

Paschal mystery living is as concrete as Jesus' life and mission. For example, like Jesus, we are living justly when we die to selfishness and rise to the needs of others. Like Jesus, we “show no partiality” when we die to judgments and categorizing or labeling others and rise to seeing all people as beloved children of God. Like Jesus, we do good when we forgive; we heal others when we offer kind words instead of words that tear down, or help another without being asked. Our baptism is ongoing in our lives. We cannot take our baptism for granted because it is not simply a ritual that happens and is finished, but it is a relationship and way of life to be lived.

Words to reflect upon: our baptism is a relationship and way of life to be lived

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers,
intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,
1 Timothy 2:1*

LET US PRAY TOGETHER TODAY for the chronically ill: Sylvia Tasner, Jerry and Albert Vega, Fr. Vega, Rudy & Sonia Méndez, and **MAGGIE MAZIARZ**, who is critically ill. *Let us continue to pray together this week for all displaced people and refugees, especially the children, and that this painful scourge be removed from the face of God's earth.*

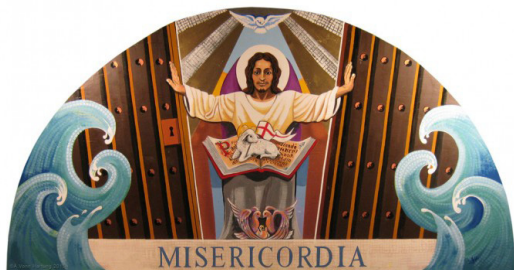


MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER

This motto for the **Holy Year of Mercy** is an invitation to follow the merciful example of God, who asks people not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love. We who have experienced mercy know that we must be merciful ourselves

This is what mercy looks like in action. It consoles, it liberates, it gives courage, it brings light, it offers help. Mercy is more than an ethic, more than a dogma. Jesus Christ is mercy, the mercy of the Father incarnate in the world. And all of us who follow Him this Holy Year of Mercy, and beyond, must walk with Pope Francis through that holy door, the door in our hearts and in our consciences.

San Juan's Holy Door, the main entrance door of the Cathedral, is now crowned by our own Vonn Hartung's



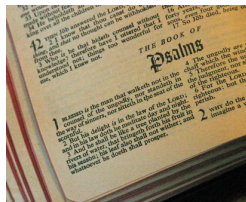
exquisite painting "Misericordia". Commissioned by Mons. Roberto Gonzalez in celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the painting is an invitation for each of us to walk through the Holy Door to an encounter with the God of Mercy. The art may be seen on line at <http://www.avonnhartung.com/2015/12/22/doors-of-mercy/>

Peace imposed only by superiority of power and force is a false peace. Peace is not treachery. Peace is not a lie made into a system. Much less is it pitiless totalitarian tyranny. Nor is it, in any way, violence: though at least violence does not dare to appropriate to itself the noble name of Peace.

A Peace that is not the result of true respect for man is not true Peace.

And what do we call this sincere feeling for man? We call it Justice.
— Pope Paul VI, January 1, 1972

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE



Psalm 104: 1-4, 24-25, 27-30

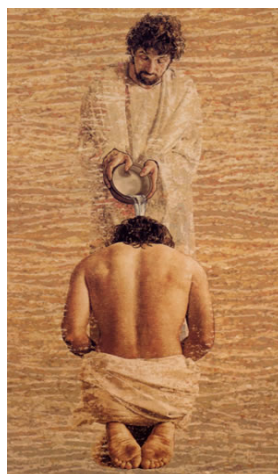
In psalm 104 we bless God for giving the Spirit of life, for giving the "beloved Son" who leads us to fullness of Life, for giving the baptism that sets us on fire to "do good". We will sing some

of the same psalm verses later in the liturgical year for Pentecost Sunday. What is the connection between Christ's baptism and Pentecost? Between your baptism and Pentecost?

—The Liturgical Corner

You are baptized as Priest, Prophet and King

God commanded Israel to consecrate priest, prophet and kings to him by anointing them on the forehead with oil.



We enter into this three-office of Christ—as priest, prophet and king—in our baptism: after we are washed in the water, we are anointed on the head with oil.

The offices of priest, prophet and king are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and we are baptized into him. We all share in some way in these offices.

Priest—offering sacrifice In our baptismal priesthood, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God giving witness to our faith in the way we live our lives.

Prophet-teaching All of us are called to witness to the Gospel by our lives and by our words. "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words". (St. Francis of Assisi)

King—serving The kingship of Christ is one of service. In the age of the Israelites, kings were first of all stewards of the "treasures" God entrusted to them, his people. The mandate of the servant king is to cultivate the kingdom for God, to be a partner with God in the transformation of the world in the light of the Gospel.

The Physician

Whether we want to admit it or not,
There's often some woundedness in us,
A concealed or deserted lesion of spirit
Begging for our undivided attention.
You are the supreme inner Physician,
Medicine for whatever ails our hearts,
A touch of regard for what we ignore,
A voice of love for recurring failure,
A healing aid for endless bruising,
A sure remedy for emotional misery.

Kubir, in Fragments of Your Ancient Name

Sparks of the Divine

It is obvious that the physical part of us must be nourished into growth. What we fail to understand with equal certainty is the fact that the soul itself, unquenchable spirit, must also be nourished, be shaped and be allowed to come to fullness.

The soul must be trained like the eye to see the rest of life, like the ear to hear the real music of life, like the heart to beat for things worth saving. "The spark of the divine dwells in thee." Ella Wheeler Witco, American poet, wrote, "Let it grow".

Everybody's soul is another sliver of the Divine. "Your soul," T.F. Hodge wrote, "is God's imagination".