

I. Renewing Baptismal Promises on the Banks of the Jordan River

This past October, I stood on the banks of the Jordan River, in the vicinity of where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. What a thrill to be at the place where the identity of Our Lord as revealed and His public ministry began! With many other pilgrims, I renewed my Baptismal Promises.

II. Most Important Day

Several years ago, I was meeting with the Vocation Club from one of our elementary schools. I asked the students what they thought was the most important day of my life. One young girl proposed that it was the day that I became the Archbishop of Kansas City. In just a few days, I will observe the 15th anniversary of assuming the responsibilities of serving as your Archbishop. It is a day I will never forget, but it is not the most important day of my life. Another student suggested that it was the day I was ordained a priest. In May, I will observe the 45th anniversary of my priestly ordination. Again, it is a day that I will always fondly remember, but it is not the most important day of my life.

The most important day of my life was the day of my Baptism. Think about it. On the day of our Baptism, we received the very life of God and were given an eternal destiny to live with the Lord and his Saints forever. Through the waters of Baptism, we became living temples, carrying the very life of God. What could possibly compare in importance to the day of our Baptism?

III. Beloved Son or Daughter

When Jesus emerged from the waters of the Jordan, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and His Heavenly Father declared: **"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."** Later in the Gospel, Jesus declared that anyone who does the will of His Heavenly Father is His sister or brother. Through Jesus, we also became beloved Daughters and Sons of our Heavenly Father.

Most of us are painfully aware of our weaknesses and faults. For many of us, it is easy to become discouraged by the negative self-talk that can dominate our minds. What a difference it makes when we call to mind our true identity as Beloved Daughters and Sons of God, who have His image imprinted upon our souls and for whom the Son of God gave His life on Calvary.

If we remind ourselves of our dignity as Beloved Daughters and Sons of God, if we can drill this truth into the hearts of our children, what a difference it will make in our world. Despite all of our failures to live in a manner consistent with our identity, our Heavenly Father loves us even in our weakness and is always eager to extend to us His Divine Mercy. We remain His Beloved Daughters and Sons. That is who we are!



Recalling our baptismal identity has the power to liberate us from the Devil's desire to dishearten and dispirit us. The Evil One wants us to wallow in regret and bring us to despair. Our Lord, on the other hand, desires for us to claim our identity as His brothers and sisters and embrace our call to greatness – to love others as Jesus has loved us.

IV. Prayer, Care, Share

This past October, more than 1,500 leaders from every parish in the Archdiocese gathered for the **Enflame Our Hearts Convocation**. The participants were challenged to reinvigorate our parishes and our entire Archdiocese by following a simple but profoundly powerful model: prayer, care and share.

At the beginning of each calendar year, we have a beautiful tradition in the Archdiocese to unite as one community of Faith to pool, our resources in order to share the Joy of the Gospel with others and to bring the love of Jesus to those who are hurting in our communities.

The personal sacrifice that you make in giving to **Call To Share**: 1) makes it possible for families who are struggling financially to be able to send their children to a Catholic School; 2) helps refugees fleeing persecution to realize the American dream to find employment and make a home for their family in a new land; 3) provides medical care, counseling and practical support for a mother experiencing an untimely pregnancy; 4) makes it possible for inner city youth to participate in summer camps at Prairie Star Ranch; 5) helps children with intellectual disabilities prepare for the reception of the sacraments; 6) forms engaged couples for a healthy and happy marriage; 7) provides opportunities for couples to renew and strengthen their marriage; 8) gives a homeless man not only a place to sleep but also the resources to rebuild his life; and 9) helps liberate a couple from crushing payday loan debt while providing them with financial literacy training. Your gift to **Call To Share** helps our Church do all of this and so much more.

In discerning your gift to **Call To Share**, I urge you to use the Convocation model by first praying. Give thanks to our Heavenly Father for His abundant blessings. Ask Him to give you a tender heart that cares for those who spiritually need to hear the Gospel or who materially need assistance with the necessities of life. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to help you discern what it means in the unique circumstances of your life to share your **First Fruits** to honor God by helping others.

I am always amazed and edified by your generosity to the Church in support of our efforts to proclaim the love and hope of the Gospel of Jesus to a world in desperate need of its truth. Our Catholic Faith is such a gift and blessing. Sadly, there are so many in our communities who do not know Jesus and the joy of His Gospel.

Filled with gratitude for the gift of your Faith and knowing the truth that you are a Beloved Daughter or Son of God, I humbly ask you again this year to generously support **Call To Share**. Through your sacrificial gift, help others experience the love of Jesus and discover their dignity as Beloved Daughters or Sons of God.

