



BAPTISM OF THE LORD CALL TO SHARE HOMILY JANUARY 8-9, 2022

I Not Worthy to Loosen the Thongs of His Sandals

In the preface for today's Mass, the celebrant prays: "For in the waters of the Jordan you revealed with signs and wonders a new Baptism, so that through the voice that came down from heaven we might come to believe in your Word dwelling among us, and by the Spirit descending like a dove we might know Christ your Servant has been anointed with the oil of gladness and sent to bring good news to the poor."

John the Baptist, a great prophet and preacher, is drawing tremendous crowds to repent from their sins and to be baptized in the muddy waters of the Jordan. The people are excited by the possibility that John might be the long awaited Messiah. John immediately squelches the rumors that suggest he is the fulfillment of Jewish Messianic dreams.

Instead, John prophesies that the actual Messiah is so much more impressive and powerful, and that the Baptist is not even worthy to do the task of a slave, loosening the sandal thongs of the Christ's dusty feet. Luke's Gospel describes Our Lord in prayer after being baptized by John, when the Holy Spirit descends upon Him, and the voice of the Father declares Jesus to be His Beloved Son.

II Recipients of Fire and the Holy Spirit

You and I have been blest beyond what our minds could imagine to be recipients of this New Baptism about which John had prophesied – a Baptism not only capable of cleansing and liberating us from the mud and grime of this sin fractured world but actually imparting to us the very life of God and making us temples of the Holy Spirit. Through the waters of Baptism, Jesus gave us His life and made us beloved adopted daughters and sons of our Heavenly Father. We have been baptized with Fire and the Holy Spirit, empowering us to continue the mission of Jesus to bring good news to the poor.

Through Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One, we have been anointed with the Oil of Gladness to proclaim the Joy of His Gospel to a sin saddened and despairing world.



III Heralds of the Good News

It is our privilege as well as our responsibility to proclaim the Joy of the Gospel of Jesus. As Christians, we believe in a God who loves us despite our sin and disloyalty. We believe in a God who pursues us and loves us even in our weakness and unworthiness. We believe in a God who desires to cleanse us from the filth and muck of sin and to place rings on our fingers and clothe us with the cloak of gladness, the protective shield of His love. As beloved daughters and sons of the King, we are on a mission to infect the world with the Joy of God's love.

The world offers us many pleasures but is incapable of providing us with authentic Joy. Pleasures addict and enslave us. They leave us empty and unsatisfied, always craving more.

Jesus instead gives us the Joy of experiencing God's love for us. This Joy is not dependent on material things and the external circumstances of our lives. The source of the Joy of Jesus is the truth of our identity as princesses and princes of the King of Heaven.

IV The Example of Father Emil Kapaun

Recently, the mortal remains of Father Emil Kapaun were discovered and brought home to Kansas. He grew up in Pilsen, Kansas and was a priest of the Diocese of Wichita. Chaplain Kapaun died in the 1950's in a prisoner of war camp in Korea. Father Kapaun posthumously received from our nation the Medal of Honor, and his cause for canonization is underway.

When the Korean War ended, the liberating forces noticed that there was something different about the survivors of the prisoner of war camp where Father Kapaun died. They had a hope about them and a spirit of camaraderie unlike what they had witnessed in the survivors of other camps.

When questioned about the source of this spirit of hope and concern for one another, the survivors attributed their unusual *esprit de corps* to their Chaplain, Father Kapaun. By his example, Father Kapaun taught his fellow prisoners that they were still free. Even in the harsh circumstances of the camp, they were still free to love and praise God. They were still free to care for and support each other. They were still free to love even their enemies, the guards who treated them at times with merciless cruelty.

V The Joy that Overcomes and Endures

This is the Joy that our Catholic Faith offers us. A joy that the world cannot give nor can it steal from us. A joy that is not dependent on the external circumstances of our lives but is the fruit of our identity as beloved sons and daughters of the Heavenly King. It is a Joy that we can still experience in a prisoner of war camp or in the midst of life's normal adversities or even during the perils of a pandemic.



VI Call to Share – Shouting our Joy

Each year at this time, I invite you to participate in the annual **Call to Share** campaign that funds so many of our pastoral, educational and charitable ministries. This is truly a Catholic moment when we pool our resources, from Marysville to Atchison from Wamego to Topeka from Lawrence to Kansas City from Overland Park to Emporia, in order to do something truly beautiful together that none of us individually or no single parish can do on its own.

Your gift to **Call to Share** helps fund the formation of our heroic Catholic School teachers, the youth camps at Prairies Star Ranch, the Catholic Education Fund's efforts to provide scholarships to students, Catholic Charities resettlement of refugees from Afghanistan, the provision of food, energy and housing for those adversely affected by the pandemic, marriage prep for engaged couples, enrichment experiences for those already married, financial, medical and emotional support for those with a difficult pregnancy, exceptional care for the elderly at Villa St. Francis and so much more.

Your sacrificial gift to **Call to Share** is one of the ways that we make tangible the love of Jesus and proclaim the Joy of His Gospel. Each year, this is a moment when the goodness of our Catholic Community shines brightly, bringing hope and help to thousands. I ask you to pray over this invitation to support generously Call to Share and give what the Holy Spirit inspires you to give.

VII Set the World on Fire

St. Catherine of Siena said: **“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”** God desires each of us to be His Beloved Sons and Daughters. If we live our identity as Princesses and Princes of the Heavenly King, we will again this year set the world on fire with God's love and shout out boldly the Joy of His Gospel.