

JANUARY 9, 2022

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

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Office staffed T, W and Th, as we are able.

We continue to offer three masses each week to enable people to attend while maintaining appropriate social distancing. The Sunday 9:30 am mass continues to be live streamed on our Facebook page. We are also offering a Saturday 5:00 pm mass and a Sunday 12:00 pm (noon) mass.

Although state capacity restrictions have been lifted and masks are not currently required, we encourage everyone to participate in ways that are safe and appropriate for them. If you wish to maintain physical distancing, the noon mass has the lightest attendance. We are gradually returning elements that have been missing during the pandemic. We recently reinstated congregational singing and ushers and are working towards the return of lectors and servers.

Fr. Joe, Fr. Jude and the staff hold you all in our prayers, and ask that you pray for us and for all the essential workers who are striving to keep things running.

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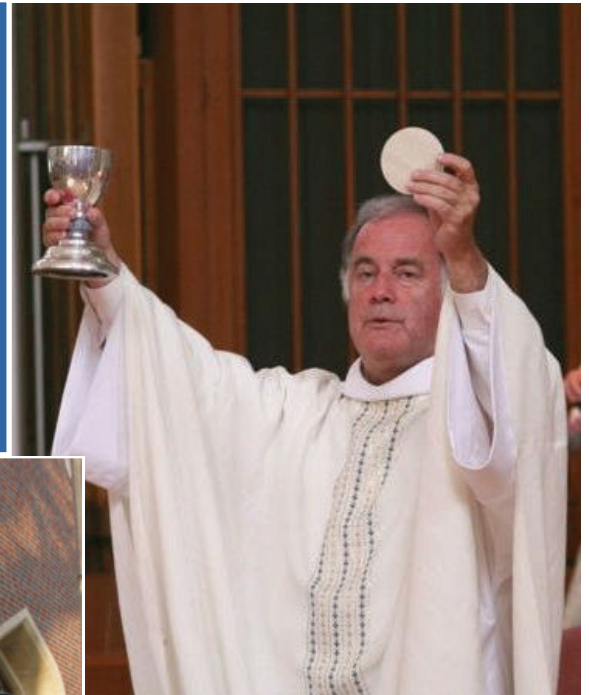
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"I pray a lot  
and I renew  
my baptismal vows  
daily..."

Saint Mother Theresa



Say YES to  
love and peace.  
Amen! Alleluia!



**This week at St. Albert's**

(masses and intentions are in **BOLD** type)

**Saturday, January 8**

**5:00 pm mass Patrick Carter †**

**Sunday, January 9**

**9:30 am mass Fr. Robert Keane †**

10:30 am Sunday hospitality in the Social Hall

11:00 am Faith Formation for children and youth resumes

**12:00 pm mass Joan Ellison †**

**Monday, January 10**

**8:15 am Marge Kadlec †**

**Tuesday, January 11**

**8:15 am Jerry Miller †**

9:30 am Staff meeting

**Wednesday, January 12**

**Thursday, January 13**

**8:15 am Ben Wilkie †**

12:00 pm Crafts & conversation, Social Hall

**Friday, January 14**

**8:15 am Emily Ott †**

**Saturday, January 15**

**5:00 pm mass Deceased Members of the Carter Family †**

**Sunday, January 16**

**9:30 am mass Fr. Robert Keane †**

10:30 am Sunday hospitality in the Social Hall

11:00 am Faith Formation for children and youth resumes

**12:00 pm mass Kathy Post †**

**Readings: week of January 9, 2022**

**Sunday:** Is 42:1-4, 6-7/Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 [11b]/Acts 10:34-38/Lk 3:15-16, 21-22  
or, Is 40:1-5, 9-11/Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30 [1]/Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7/Lk 3:15-16, 21-22

**Monday:** 1 Sm 1:1-8/Ps 116:12-13, 14-17, 18-19/Mk 1:14-20

**Tuesday:** 1 Sm 1:9-20/1 Sm 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd/Mk 1:21-28

**Wednesday:** 1 Sm 3:1-10, 19-20/Ps 40:2 and 5, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10/Mk 1:29-39

**Thursday:** 1 Sm 4:1-11/Ps 44:10-11, 14-15, 24-25/Mk 1:40-45

**Friday:** 1 Sm 8:4-7, 10-22a/Ps 89:16-17, 18-19/Mk 2:1-12

**Saturday:** 1 Sm 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a/Ps 21:2-3, 4-5, 6-7/Mk 2:13-17

**Next Sunday:** Is 62:1-5/Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10 [3]/1 Cor 12:4-11/Jn 2:1-11  
or, Is 40:1-5, 9-11/Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30 [1]/Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7/Lk 3:15-16, 21-22

\* **We will continue to offer three Masses** each weekend for as long as the Sunday noon mass remains popular/practical. We also continue to livestream the 9:30 AM liturgy.

\* **The general dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation has been lifted.** The dispensation remains available to people at high risk of developing serious illness and for people who care for such individuals. Anyone with symptoms or recent exposure to COVID-19 must still remain at home for the safety of all.

\* **Morning masses in the chapel have resumed at 8:15 am, with the rosary at 8:00 am.** As in the pre-pandemic past, weekday masses will be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The East door off the back parking lot will be open for weekday masses, along with the elevator entrance.

\* **Use of the front center church doors continues to be encouraged for weekend masses, along with the elevator entrance.**

\* **There are no seating restrictions.** Please respect the desires of those who wish to maintain some physical separation. Hand sanitizer is available. The Sunday 12 noon mass offers the most spaced seating.

★ **Masks are strongly encouraged** for all people over the age of two. The CDC recommends that all people wear masks indoors in areas with high transmission rates of covid-19. Currently Hennepin County significantly exceeds the threshold for high transmission. Masks should cover both nose and mouth. We have disposable and cloth masks available near the entrance to the church.

\* **We invite you to join us in song.** The hymnals are in the pews.

\* **Give the Sign of Peace** to those near you in ways others appear comfortable with.

**Sunday Hospitality**

Coffee and minimal treats resume in the Social Hall this weekend between the Sunday masses.

Volunteers are needed to keep this popular get-together time going, especially for clean up! Teams are in place for January, except for the last weekend. Please contact Ed Burke if you're interested in covering Jan. 30 or beyond. Teams need not provide anything fancy... all we need is an opportunity to get together with some light refreshments. Ed can be reached at 612-724-3643, ext 103 or e.burke@saintalbertthegreat.org.

## “Who witnessed your baptism?”

Before you start scrambling for a copy of your baptismal certificate, have you ever thought about this question: “Who witnessed your baptism?” I would venture to say that most do not have a clue when it comes to naming individuals, except, one’s parents. Godparents (now known as Sponsors) remain shadow like characters in this historical, ecclesial drama. Aside from the chilling baptismal scenes of Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) acting as the Godfather of his nephew in the film, “The Godfather,” Godparents’ traditional pledge consists in assisting the parents in safeguarding the faith lives of their children. Just in case parents were slacking off in their religious obligations, Godparents might “make an offer the parents can’t refuse” in getting the children back in the good graces of the Church.

I suspect that there are few major faith saving interventions where Godparents usurped the role of parents. While baptism might seem like an initiation rite into an exclusive club with rights and privileges, much like pledging in a sorority or fraternity, theologically baptism is an initiation into the life of Christ, a way of life and not merely a symbolic membership. Indeed, this is a serious commitment. While parents and Godparents witnessed the baptismal event and became our first teachers of the faith, each of us is responsible to live and act out the Life of Christ in our personal lives. To live fully the Christian Life is, through the grace of God, to be Christ in the world today.

In quiet eloquence of Mother Theresa (now a canonized saint), when asked the secret of her success, simply said: “I pray a lot and I renew my baptismal vows daily.” In describing Christ’s presence within her, she expanded her understanding of baptism: “Christ prays in me, works in me, sees through my eyes, speaks through my words, walks with my feet and loves with my heart. To the extent that we live and function as Christ in our everyday lives, we will behave as we believe.”

In a recent New Year’s homily, Pope Francis reminded thousands of pilgrims waiting in St. Peter’s Square that in taking our baptisms seriously, “We must let ourselves be reborn to overcome the indifference that blocks solidarity, and to leave behind false neutrality which prevents sharing. We know that with the New Year everything will not change and that many of yesterday’s problems will also remain tomorrow but living a life in Christ is to live a wish sustained by real hope.”

This weekend we are celebrating the Baptism of Jesus. This event was, at one time, a source of controversy and embarrassment in the history of the early Church. Traditionally understood to be thirty years old when baptized (now commemorated as the First of the Luminous Mysteries of the rosary), Jesus took the plunge in the Jordan River and was baptized by his cousin, John the Baptist. A few years ago, I visited this site along the banks of the river Jordan, and along with other pilgrims, wading into the river seeking, no doubt, to experience a chance to go with the flow of our baptismal vows. The three Synoptic gospels (Luke 3:21-22; Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11) dramatize the event with the descent of God’s blessing in the form of a dove and conclude with the statement: “*Thou art my beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased.*” The theological controversy was about the necessity of Jesus’ need for baptism since he was without sin. Only in Matthew’s account does John the Baptist object to Jesus’ request for baptism. Most biblical scholars agree that Jesus’ baptism was to “set an example” for his followers. Traditional atonement/redemption theology subscribes to baptism as the freedom from “Original Sin” and initiating entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. In some theological circles, this “gift of reparation” is understood as an Original Blessing,

In a memorable scene from the movie “Tender Mercies,” Robert Duval plays a recovering down and out alcoholic country Western singer who is persuaded by his girlfriend to take the baptismal plunge. Emerging from

the total immersion experience, she asked: “Do you feel any different?” He replies, “Not yet, but I’m hoping.” In effect, we are all hoping that we will feel better, act better and be better. I am reminded of a ten- year- old boy, named Isaiah, who I baptized years ago. Upon raising his head from the water, he looked at me and his witnesses and said: “Damn, I feel good. I really do!” James Brown, the late great “Godfather of Soul,” would, I venture, have been proud to be one of his greatest witnesses, especially when Isaiah shouted, “I feel good!”

The feast of the Baptism of the Lord signals an end to the Christmas story, closing the liturgical door to complex genealogical readings, manger stories, wandering Magi and Jesus’ early years in Nazareth. In today’s gospel account of the baptism, Luke (3: 15-22) portrays Jesus being baptized with a multitude of other eager disciples of John the Baptist. This “public component” sets the stage for understanding baptism not as a private act between God and the person being baptized, but as a public act linking individuals to the greater tradition and historical continuity of the Church. In the Synoptic accounts, after his baptism, Jesus is led “by the Spirit” into the wilderness where he was tested by the Devil for forty days. Oddly enough, in the gospel of John there is no public record of Jesus’ baptism, but merely a “hint” (John 1:26-34). The Prophet Isaiah (42:1-7) also “hints” at baptism in our first reading for this feast day: “*I am the Lord, I have called you into righteousness, and have taken you by the hand and kept you safe.*” In the second reading for the feast, Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles (10:34-38), acknowledges the baptism of Jesus and proclaims: “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went about doing charitable deeds and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil.*” Not a bad job description for any of us who have been baptized.

Having rediscovered my baptismal certificate some years ago, I am confident of the identity of my baptismal witnesses. Reminiscing about my parents, my godparents (Martin and Catherine Kilroy) and my uncle, William Marrin, the priest who baptized me, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and a sense of intergenerational connectedness. With no mention of World War II raging in The Pacific Theater and in Europe nor mention of Pope Pius XII, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin I was snatched from the confines of Limbo (no-longer theological parlance for the place for unbaptized children) and temporarily from world chaos, I was baptized in the newly minted parish of St. Albert the Great, the parish where I would become pastor sixty-four years later. I do know who witnessed my baptism and I have come to know those who have helped me to live out my baptism vows. So far, it has been a remarkable journey of faith in the company of others who are attempting to “put on Christ” as a way of life, and not a mere social membership. As Bishop Fulton Sheen, a wonderful Catholic televangelist of the 1950’s, was fond of saying: “If you do not behave as you believe, you will end up believing as you behave.” I continue to look forward to witnessing the presence of Jesus in the world, embracing the uncertainty of the pandemic and in acting as surrogate “Godparent” to others. I do not know about you, but I “feel dam good” about my baptism. And your thoughts on the subject?

*Peace in the New Year,  
Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.*





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