

From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

January 12, 2025

Dear Friends,

Today's feast of the Baptism of the Lord provides a transition from the Advent-Christmas Season to Ordinary Time. Once again, John the Baptist appears to be pointing to Jesus. The focus of today's gospel seems to be the involvement of the Holy Spirit and the Father in propelling Jesus' God-given mission.

Luke's gospel frequently mentions the Holy Spirit. It was in the Holy Spirit that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, spoke of his birth. Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit and hastened to visit Elizabeth. Just as these gospel characters take up a God given mission propelled by the Holy Spirit, so too does Jesus. The Holy Spirit descended upon him at his baptism. Luke adds that the Father approves of what has happened. "You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased." Thus, the formula for Baptism in the Catholic Church is trinitarian. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

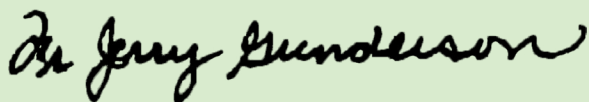
When parents make the decision to baptize their child they promise to raise the child in the practice of faith. In this regard they seek the support of the entire community of faith to help them raise the child as a person who "keeps the flame of faith alive in their heart," and who "...goes out to meet the Lord when he comes."

Over the past few months Ramiro and Lucia Roman have been preparing to be coordinators of the Infant Baptism Preparation Sessions for parents at St. Patrick. I am grateful for their willingness to assume this ministry. They bring years of Catholic practice and parental experience. They love to share their faith with others.

When a family contacts the parish pastoral office to arrange for a baptism, they usually speak with Joanne Manarik, our parish secretary. Joanne takes some basic information and briefly tells the family about our program. Then their contact information is provided to Ramiro and Lucia who contact the parents as soon as possible. They invite them to a two-hour parent preparation session. Godparents are also invited. The preference is to have multiple new parent couples present at this session. They share a common experience of being new parents. The birth of a child is a happy occasion for a family and the church shares in the joy of welcoming a child. Parents are asked to reflect from a faith perspective on the changes brought about by becoming new parents.

While most baptisms take place after the last Mass on Sundays, it is also possible to celebrate a Baptism at a Sunday Mass. When done in this way the baptism becomes an occasion for the entire assembly to renew our baptism promises and to pledge support for the young family in their mission of raising their child in faith.

A reminder: I will be away from January 15-25. Fr Wilfred Bwezani Phiri will be taking my place. He is the pastor of Chikwa Parish in the Chipata diocese of Zambia. I know you will welcome him.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson