

Archbishop's Call to Share 2021 Homily
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Kick-off Sunday
January 10, 2021

Each year in early January, we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In the preface for Mass this weekend we pray: "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's descending in the likeness of a dove we might know that Christ your Servant has been anointed with the oil of gladness and sent to bring the good news to the poor."

What was revealed in the Jordan River is good news. Jesus plunges into the waters of the Jordan, immersing Himself completely in our human condition, in order to lead us through the waters of our Baptism to freedom from the slavery of sin to share in His abundant and eternal life.

With all that we have experienced this past year because of the Covid pandemic, the Good News of understanding our identity as beloved daughters and sons of God has never been more important! The most important day of our lives was the day of our Baptism, because on that day we became beloved daughters and sons of our Heavenly Father and we were given an eternal destiny to live with God and His saints forever in Heaven.

Our Lord never promised His disciples that following Him would be easy. In fact, He reminds us that to follow Him will mean embracing the cross. In fact, it is our reaction to adversity that has the ability to make our witness of the Joy of the Gospel even more powerful and compelling. It is the ability of the disciples of Jesus to be witnesses of hope in the midst of the struggles of this world that makes the Gospel attractive to others.

While we wish Covid 19 never happened and we could have avoided the difficulties of the past year, for the Christian it has been an opportunity to witness to the difference that friendship with Jesus makes in our lives. It is our ability not to become self-absorbed and discouraged with present trials but instead focused on the opportunities to bring to others the mercy and love of God that becomes the very means to draw others to desire Jesus.

I have been so edified by how Catholics throughout the Archdiocese have been messengers of hope and joy to the entire community. Catholic Charities, despite increased needs and fewer available volunteers, brought the compassionate love of Jesus to more individuals and families. In addition to those who have contracted the virus, there have been many financial victims resulting from the shutdown of much of our economy. Catholic Charities has been there to help all those in need.

Our Catholic School teachers have embraced the challenge of conducting in-person classes, while observing all the protocols to keep students and their families as safe as possible. In many cases, they have also provided distant learning opportunities to accommodate the needs and preferences of some school families.



Our Priests and parish staffs have been creative in ministering to parishioners even in the midst of government mandated shelter in place orders. They have found safe ways to make the sacraments available to parishioners and have used technology to keep parishes active and vibrant. They have shown special care for the elderly and those most vulnerable to the effects of the Covid virus.

Though they are the least vulnerable to the physical effects of Covid, our young people have been powerfully impacted by the social isolation required because of health department protocols. Our Youth ministry found a way to modify our usual programs to keep camp open for youth this summer. Our Youth Office created beautiful and powerful opportunities for our young people to gather and pray virtually.

Many Catholic doctors, nurses and other medical personnel were on the front lines ministering to those who contracted the virus. These heroic men and women made the healing love of Jesus real to their patients and their families.

In the midst of the pandemic, our Pro-Life ministry launched the ***Walking with Moms in Need*** initiative expanding support and the available resources for those experiencing financial as well as other difficulties during a pregnancy. At the same time thanks to the work of a special Foster Care Task Force, we are mobilizing the Catholic community to surround with love children whose families are going through a difficult time.

Once again I have been amazed by the generosity of the people of the Archdiocese in their support of our parishes, schools and ministries. Despite all of the economic hardships that many of our parishioners experienced, the donations to ***Call to Share*** matched the generosity of previous years.

I come to you again this year humbly asking your for generous support for the 2021 ***Archbishop's Call to Share*** appeal. Many may not be able to give this year because of economic hardship. We still need your prayers. For those of us who have continued to be blest during these difficult times, I ask you to invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discernment of making a sacrificial gift to ***Call to Share 2021***.

Thank you for helping our Church during the unforeseen challenges of 2020 being witnesses of the hope and love of the Son of God who was baptized in the Jordan. None of us know what challenges 2021 will bring. Yet, we do know that Jesus will be with us. We do know that through Him we have become beloved daughters and sons of God. We do know that Our Lord is inviting us to pool our prayers and financial resources to equip the Church to continue to proclaim the truth of God's amazing love revealed in the river Jordan 2,000 years ago. We are our Heavenly Father's beloved sons and daughters who have a mission to bring the love of the one baptized in the Jordan to the world today.

