



Bringing Home the Word

The Baptism of the Lord (C)
January 9, 2022

Renewal by the Holy Spirit

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

We have all received baptism, but why don't the amazing fruits and graces received then always show themselves powerfully in our lives?

Titus tells us what has already happened for us in baptism. We were saved "through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit" (3:5). Yet this renewal accomplished by the Spirit needs to be fully embraced by us for it to reach its potential. We know we have been renewed, but how do we keep renewing? This happens by prayerful contact with the Holy Spirit.

In Titus, Spirit is capitalized because it's the Spirit of God. Renewal by the Holy Spirit is a renewal in which God, not man, is the principal protagonist. "Behold, I" (not you) "make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

We often think that to be renewed and grow, we have to do something. God tells us it is something he does. "I, the LORD, make you holy" (Leviticus 20:8). We have to give him back the power he already has. Or better yet, we need to recognize God's power and let him use it in us.

A revolution needs to happen in our minds and hearts where we recognize that without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. So, ask the Holy Spirit to come upon you in a real baptism of fire. Then all those baptismal gifts will spark into a flame and help you set the world ablaze with his love! +

Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 or
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

I, the LORD, have called you
for justice, /
I have grasped you by the hand.

**Acts 10:34-38 or
Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7**

He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

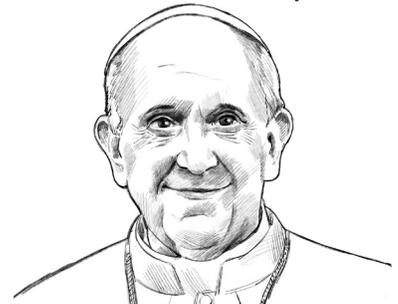
[John said,] "I am baptizing you with water, but...he will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire."

We need to recognize God's power and let him use it in us. A revolution must happen in our minds and hearts.

A Word from Pope Francis

After these thirty years of hidden life, Jesus' public life begins. And it begins precisely with his baptism in the River Jordan. But Jesus is God; why does Jesus get baptized?... Because he wants to be with the sinners. For this reason, he gets in line with them and does the same thing they do.

—Angelus, Baptism of the Lord, January 10, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When was the last time I prayed to the Holy Spirit? He is a real divine person; talk to him.
- Do I have courage to ask the Holy Spirit to come down and touch my soul with his fire?

The Art of Complaining

By Very Reverend Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

At some time or another, I think every pastor has gotten “hate mail.” Letters of complaint, filled with anger, the occasional foul word, or any variety of accusations and disparaging remarks are part of pastoring. Pastors can’t please everyone. Once, just briefly, I thought about printing a viciously negative letter I received in the parish bulletin. I even thought about tacking it to the church notice board. I didn’t do it, realizing it could embarrass the author or—worse for me—earn the writer a few sympathizers.

Complaining is part of being human. We’ve likely all been known to complain about family members, friends, or coworkers. As a pastor, complaints can be helpful. How else will the parish improve? The difficulty is that there are very few persons schooled in fashioning and delivering a well-thought-out complaint. That means, for most of us, our message is lost.

Here are some tips to help parishioners master the art of complaining and get their pastor’s ear:

Presume goodwill. Pastors don’t make random decisions just to make their parishioners miserable. Decisions are often given a great deal of thought and discussed thoroughly with parish staffers, pastoral councils, and other clergy and laity. Presume your pastor’s heart is in the right place. Most pastors love their people and want what is best for everyone in the parish.



Don’t be anonymous. Anonymous complaints are rarely taken seriously unless they’re of the type that require the intervention of law enforcement. I’m not writing about those here. A complaint should invite conversation, interaction, and hopefully an exchange of ideas, concerns, hopes, and probable solutions. You can’t talk to “anonymous.” Unsigned complaints usually go nowhere.

Find allies. True concern for the well-being of the parish should be shared. If one person is struggling with a pastor’s decisions, it is likely that others are, too. I’m not making the strength-in-numbers argument here. Lobbying in church really isn’t a good idea. But if a decision is negatively affecting a number of people, it should be reviewed.

Meet in person. Much is left open to interpretation when a complaint is only shared in writing. Text and email complaints, even with the inclusion of emojis, don’t carry emotions. Facial expressions, body language, tone and volume of the speaker, even silence, allow for total communication. Ask for a meeting. Agree together about who should be invited. Sit down and have a dialogue.

Be open to compromise. Don’t go to your pastor with a decision. Approach him with a question. Why the change? Why now? Why this new direction? “Why” is a great starting point. It can lead to greater understanding, which may change your opinion. Be part of the solution.

Be Christian. Kindness, even when you’re angry about something, will always win you a fair hearing. Be kind. Be kind. Be kind. +

Complaints can help a parish improve. Check out these tips for some good ways to get your pastor’s ear.

**PRAYER**

Lord, give me a shepherd’s heart so that I can show your love and compassion to someone in need.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 10–15

Monday, Weekday:
1 Sm 1:1–8 / Mk 1:14–20

Tuesday, Weekday:
1 Sm 1:9–20 / Mk 1:21–28

Wednesday, Weekday:
1 Sm 3:1–10, 19–20 / Mk 1:29–39

Thursday, Weekday:
1 Sm 4:1–11 / Mk 1:40–45

Friday, Weekday:
1 Sm 8:4–7, 10–22a / Mk 2:1–12

Saturday, Weekday:
1 Sm 9:1–4, 17–19; 10:1a / Mk 2:13–17

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