

# THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

From the Pastor's Desk

Today is the Feast of The Baptism of the Lord. With this feast we come to the close of the Christmas season. Throughout this holy season we recalled the birth of our Savior: God became one of us to save us from sin and death. By this great act of love on the part God seeks to unite humanity and Divinity in the person of Jesus who is the Christ. We rejoice in the words of St. John the Evangelist "*The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.*" This "Word", Jesus Christ, is the perfect self-revelation of God. Jesus perfectly reveals through his life and teachings God's desire for all to be saved and draw all humanity into intimate union with Him. Today the Gospel of St. Mark reveals and affirms the Divinity of Jesus as the Son of God as we read the story of His baptism: "*and a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'*". As we move into the Ordinary Time of the year tomorrow, we open our minds and hearts to listen to the Lord and come to a deeper faith in Him.

As we consider the Baptism of Jesus by John, we must also consider the Baptism we have received. The baptism that John preaches is a baptism expressing repentance. A crowd of sinners came to John to acknowledge their sins and to be baptized as a sign of repentance. Jesus suddenly appears in the midst of the crowd of sinners. As Jesus comes forward for baptism he identifies with sinful humanity and accepts his mission to bring salvation to humanity. He is the remedy for sin. The saving mystery of the Incarnation is again revealed as Jesus is united with sinful humanity so that humanity may be redeemed and brought into unity with Divinity.

Considering our Baptism; first we look at what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says about baptism. I'm not sure how many people look to the Catechism of the Catholic Church but just the same here is how the chapter on Baptism starts with paragraph 1213. "*Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole of Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church, and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through the word.'*"

Baptism is the beginning of the saving mystery taking place in us. In the Incarnation, Jesus is united with humanity and thus the saving work of Christ has begun in our lives. In this gracious act on the part of God, we in turn respond in an act that expresses our desire to be fully united with Divinity. Baptism contains the gift of God and our response. In the case of infants, it is the desire and response of parents to the Grace of God. Our response is a rejection of sin and an affirmation of our faith in God. God always initiates and we respond. In the waters of Baptism, we are cleansed of Original Sin and welcomed into the Body of Christ. Baptism is necessary for us to be united with Divinity because we are saved in and through Christ.

As members of the Body of Christ we are freed from Original sin and now have the means to be able to live a new life in Christ. The *means* for living the Christian life to the fullest is the *Grace* which we receive in the Sacrament of Baptism. This Grace is always present to us. Grace precedes and inspires a life of holiness/discipleship. The presence of Grace in our lives is guaranteed by the Sacrament of Baptism.

However, here is the hard part; we must *cooperate* with that Grace to bring forth the good it inspires. The Grace is guaranteed. The fruitfulness of Grace is not. Our cooperation is always necessary. Human nature being what it is, we do not always appeal to and trust the Grace we received in this sacrament. For the most part we rarely give a thought about the

Grace that is readily available to us. We get caught up with the things of this world that we forget and do not consider the Grace of God in our lives. A further danger occurs as we fail in this remembering: we mistakenly believe that we are capable of leading a good and holy life by our own efforts. We fail to believe that Grace is necessary to do good, overcome temptation and sin, to meet the challenges of life and to be saved. We tend to trust ourselves over the Grace of God.

Focusing on one small point in the Catechism's description of Baptism; this sacrament is the *door* to the sacramental life of the Church. This door opens our lives to the ongoing wellspring of Sacramental Grace found in the Church. The Sacraments of the Church are the means in which our lives are continually reconfigured to Christ. Again, the abundance of God's Grace is so readily available to us through the Sacraments of the Church. It is to say that our salvation is so important that every possible means is readily available to us for our salvation. We are saved, not by teachings, but by the Sacraments. That may sound odd, but it is Jesus Christ whom we encounter in the Sacraments. Grace is abundantly available.

We live in a world that needs salvation and we experience powerlessness in the face of it. Left to ourselves we cannot defeat sin and temptation that plagues the world much less our personal lives. It is impossible. We need a Savior. The good news is that we have a Savior. We have Jesus Christ. He alone can do it. He wants to do it. This is the reason why God sent His only Begotten son into the world, to become one with humanity so that humanity may become one with Divinity. It is not something that is forced upon us but is freely offered to us. Our free response to this gracious act on the part of God is expressed first in our baptism followed by the continuous desire to live this response. The baptism given by John the Baptist did not have the power to forgive sin. It was an act that acknowledged the desire to repent from sin. The Sacrament of Baptism has the power to forgive and conquer sin: original and actual sin. Christian Baptism has been given the power to forgive sin by the One who was baptized in the Jordan: Jesus Christ. We believe that we have the necessary strength to live a life of holiness because we are united with Jesus Christ. Is it easy? No. That is why we must learn to trust it. With Grace we can lovingly and faithfully live a life worthy of the gift we have received.

On a related note; looking back over the last year we also have some vital statistics for the parish. It was an unusual year for everyone and participation in parish life was strained. Nevertheless, here are the statistics for the year. We celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism for 11 new members. There were 14 First Holy Communions. We had 5 Confirmations from the RCIA class which stalled during the virus. Unfortunately, could not celebrate them at the Easter Vigil. We were able to welcome some of those individuals shortly before Christmas. We were not able to have the Bishop here for the regular Confirmation class. That has been delayed as well and I am not sure about the next step with those students.

We celebrated the Sacrament of Matrimony for 4 couples. Those were relatively small and dignified ceremonies. In all simplicity they were wonderfully focused on the celebration of the Sacrament.

As a parish we mourned and prayed for those who have died this past year: we had 41 deaths and funerals. We also welcomed 6 new families to the parish.

Lastly, our parish school numbers remain strong as well as our Pre-school. All are doing exceptionally well since we have been enduring all the regulations imposed because of the pandemic. The same is also true for Bishop Rosecrans High

School: our numbers are good. Fortunately, we have been “in school” since the beginning of the new school year. We remain confident in maintaining this pattern. We have a future! God is good.

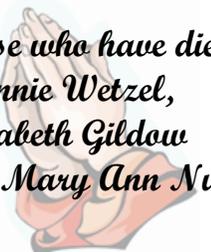
As we approach this New Year, we do so knowing there are great challenges ahead for us. We must also face these challenges with renewed confidence in the Grace of God. Trust it. We have come a long way. Great Things have happened, and Great Things are happening. We have confidence in God’s goodness, and we will continue to cooperate with the grace of God as we move into 2021.

Have a great week.  
Fr. Ralko

**This week we pray Week I of the Liturgy of the hours.**

*We pray for those who have died recently:*

*Bonnie Wetzel,  
Elizabeth Gildow  
and Sister Mary Ann Nugent*



**Church Support**

January 3, 2021	
OFFERTORY	\$10,371.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$6,482.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	\$(890.00)
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly surplus	\$(378.00)

**May God bless you for supporting your parish!**

**Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)** is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program for men and women who experienced the trauma of being raised in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional home. It is a safe place to learn how alcoholism and other family dysfunction affected the past, how it influences the present, and how to heal the wounds for a better future. Meetings are held in the Saint Nicholas Church Social Hall (Church Basement). **MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THURSDAYS at 7:00 p.m.** Please use the Silliman Street door. Meetings are expected to last no more than one hour, and masks are required. Contact James Sullivan for more Information at (740) 670 –2959.

**Bishop Rosecrans Athletic Boosters**

It’s time again to purchase your Booster Mania tickets for the upcoming year. \$25 each or three tickets for \$60, January 1 is the first drawing, they make a good gift. Questions: Contact Marvin Paul at 740-819-3429.

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS**

In addition to the those listed in the bulletin we remember the following: **Bartley Dumas** from Mr. & Mrs. Bo DeCoy and **Margaret & Tommy Paul, Mark & David Fulk and Cathy Nash Burkhart** from Marci Fulk

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT CHRIST’S TABLE**



We really need volunteers at Christ's Table. We have two shifts; 8:30-10:00 to help pack homebound meals and 10:30-1pm to help serve the meals out the back door and pack the meals in our kitchen.

**“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid.” C.S. Lewis**  
The next Grief Support Meeting is Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. The topic is “The Grief Recovery Method”. This program is offered twice in one day, at 1:00 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. and is held in the Parish Office. The event is free; however, we do request advance registration for planning purposes. Please RSVP to (740) 453-5097, ext. 14.

**Youth Ministry News!**

Catalyst Nights – Students grades 7-12 are invited to a Catalyst Night at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in the activity center on Sunday, **January 24th at 6:00 p.m.** The evening is led by the National Evangelization Team (NET), college age missionaries. The night includes dinner, presentations, games, skits, prayer, friends and fun. This is a joint, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas youth event and all teens grades 7-12 regardless of affiliation are invited. Parents are welcome!

**December Booster Mania winners:** \$50- Thomas Paul and Karen Lyon; \$25- Diane Kolopajlo, Karen Borowitz, Jenni Middaugh, Jack Dillon, Mike Butcher and Terry Paul

**Catholic Men's Conference: Called to Be Saints** - February 27, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. This year’s Columbus Catholic Men’s Conference will be both virtual/online and in-person. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this year’s event will be small group gatherings at various parishes throughout the diocese along with live streaming on the Catholic Men’s Ministry website, Facebook and YouTube. Speakers include Devin Schadt, Chris Stefanick, Fr. Donald Calloway, and Bishop Robert Brennan. To register go to [www.cathoallicmensministry.com](http://www.cathoallicmensministry.com).

**WE NEED YOUR HELP FINDING OUR PEOPLE.** Even though we are not able to visit those in nursing homes and the homebound, we continue to send cards and deliver prayer books. However, it has come to our attention that some have moved. Please help us update our nursing home and homebound lists by notifying the parish office with the name and location of those who are either homebound or in nursing homes. We don’t want to miss anyone! (740) 453-0597, ext. 14.

**CALENDARS AVAILABLE**

We wish to thank Hillis, Combs & Nestor Funeral Home for our 2020 calendars. They are available at the entrances to the church.

**JOB OPPORTUNITY**

**Mt. Olive Cemetery** has a part time position available. Duties would include mowing, weed eating, helping to open and close graves, help pouring footers for headstones and snow removal. If interested, please call the Parish Office at 453-0597.

# THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

**BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND PRAYER CARDS!** Looking for a good read? A variety of good books are available in the vestibule, including children's books. The suggested donation is \$2.00 per book and proceeds are used to purchase additional books. Free copies of the "National Catholic Register", a Catholic newspaper that covers today's hot topics, are available on the front pews in the church and in the vestibule. Also, prayer cards and pamphlets on a variety of topics are available in the vestibule. These are also free. If you don't find what you're are looking for, try New Beginnings Book Store located at 1204 Brandywine Blvd Ste A, a locally owned Christian book/gift store.

**The Book of Intentions** - Praying for each other's intentions is an essential part of parish life. The Book of Intentions can be found in the vestibule. If you would like the parish to pray for your intentions, please write the intention in a sentence or two in the book. The intentions will not be read aloud, but will be referenced during the "Prayer of the Faithful" at each Mass.

## ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Nicholas Church has a convenient way to make your regular offerings. With our electronic giving program, you can easily set up a recurring giving schedule. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. Even when something prevents you from attending services, our church will continue to receive your contributions on an uninterrupted basis. To become an electronic giver, call or visit the church office or our website: [stnickparish.org](http://stnickparish.org).

*Our thoughts and prayers remain with those serving our country currently and with their loved ones at home. We pray for a safe homecoming and that the world may one day be at peace.*

**PLEASE REMEMBER ST. NICHOLAS PARISH IN YOUR WILL. CALL THE PARISH OFFICE AT 453-0597 FOR MORE DETAILS.**

*Please join us each Monday at The St. Nicholas Parish Office Chapel at 2:00 p.m. as we gather to pray the Rosary asking Our Lady's Intercession for the many needs of our nation, community, and parish.*

## *What's Happening in Our Parish*

### MONDAY, January 11

8:00 a.m., Mass: Clara Shumate, Church

2:00 p.m., Rosary: Parish Office

### TUESDAY, January 12

9:00 a.m., Mass: St. Thomas Intention, Church

### WEDNESDAY, January 13, St. Hilary

9:00 a.m., School Mass: Jeff Armbrust, Church

### THURSDAY, January 14

8:00 a.m., Mass: St. Thomas Intention, Church

7:00 p.m., Adult Children of Alcoholics Meeting, Church Basement

### FRIDAY, January 15

8:00 a.m., Mass: Tony Maniaci, Church

## *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

### SATURDAY, January 16

4:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m., Confessions, Church

5:15 p.m., Mass: Charles E. Rock, Church

### SUNDAY, January 17

8:15 a.m., Mass: Knights of Columbus, Msgr Dury Council 505, Church

9:15 a.m., Sunday School, Parish Office

10:45 a.m., Mass: St. Nicholas Parishioners, Church

## *Readings for Week of January 11*

Mon. . . . .	Heb 1:1-6	Mk 1:14-20
Tues. . . . .	Heb 2:5-12	Mk 1:21-28
Wed . . . . .	Heb 2:14-18	Mk 1:29-39
Thurs. . . . .	Heb 3:7-14	Mk 1:40-45
Fri. . . . .	Heb 4:1-5, 11	Mk 2:1-12
Sat. . . . .	Heb 4:12-16	Mk 2:13-17
Sun . . . . .	1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19	Jn 1:35-42

## **Cantor Schedule**

January 16 & 17

5:15 p.m. Laura DeCoy

8:15 a.m. Sr. Bernadette

10:45 a.m. Kevin McCarthy