

SCREEN: blank red background

Any college football fans here? (hand up)

So you don't need me to remind you that Monday night is the big game.

LSU will face Clemson for the national championship.

Now, I've got to be honest with you,

I don't watch a lot of college football until we get to the big bowl games.

But last month my interest was drawn to this player:

SCREEN: Joe Burrow photo

LSU quarterback Joe Burrow.

A few weeks ago, Joe was awarded the Heisman trophy, college football's top honor.

At the awards ceremony, Joe gave an emotional speech and shared a little about where he came from.

Here's what he said:

"I came from Southeast Ohio, a very impoverished area where the poverty rate is almost two times the national average."

He added this:

"There are so many people there that don't have a lot and I'm up here for all those kids in Athens and Athens County that go home to not a lot of food on the table, hungry after school. You guys can be up here too."

Joe's speech moved others to set up a fund for the food bank in Athens.

So far over a half million dollars have been donated.

Why did this draw my attention?

Joe Burrow could have made the Heisman trophy all about him.

It would have been fine, he deserved it, others might have done that.

Instead, Joe made it about others.

And in his acceptance speech he was acknowledging,

"My life is not my own."

Everything I have is a gift that is meant to be shared.

I'm here because of others AND I am here for others."

I wish Joe all the best on Monday night and pray that he will continue to inspire others.

SCREEN: 20/20 Vision main screen

We're continuing our first message series of the new year titled, 20/20 Vision.

In this series we're being reminded that we need to see ourselves through God's eyes.

And today as we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord and renew our

own baptismal promises, the readings challenge us to be like John the Baptist

- to see the Son of God - and to realize, like Joe Burrow,

that our lives are not about us.

As disciples, our lives are about God and others.

Let's dive in.

GOD: In today's first reading, the Prophet Isaiah gave us

a clear vision of how God sees his children; his Chosen People.

God looks at his children with love and sees their potential for greatness.

In the passage today, God called them servants - servants with a mission.

Isaiah wrote this about how servants can please God:

SCREEN: I have grasped you by the hand;

I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people,

a light for the nations,

to open the eyes of the blind,

to bring out prisoners from confinement,

and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness. -Isaiah

This is also a perfection description of Jesus's mission and

what his followers must become.

You and I are servants with a mission to spread the Good News of Christ.

Jesus was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy.

So after he was baptized by John at the Jordan River,

we heard that God the Father spoke from heaven.

And echoing the words God spoke to Isaiah, He said this about Jesus:

SCREEN: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

So to everyone who would follow Jesus, God the Father is saying:

see Jesus for who he really is; the Son of God.

As we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord,

the Church invites us to affirm what we believe;

to say that we see Jesus as the Son of God

and are committed to following him everyday.

In just a few moments I will invite you to stand and

renew your baptismal promises.

Why does the Church have us do this?

For a couple reasons.

First, most of us were baptized as infants.

Our parents made the promises for us.

So today you'll have the opportunity to make the promises for yourself.

And the second reason we do this is,

the baptismal promises lay out really clearly what our lives are all about.

The promises first ask what we reject, then ask what we believe.

This is something I think we all need to do regularly.

And that's because as I said last week,

it's easy for some people to lose sight of their purpose in life.

It can happen to any of us.

We can be like the people of Isaiah's time....confused,

doubtful and uncertain of who we are and where we are headed.

Our vision can get hazy or dark, we can end up spiritually blind.

So renewing our promises can help clear up any uncertainty and

get us headed in the right direction.

These are the first three questions I will ask you:

SCREEN: Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?

Do you reject the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you?

Do you reject Satan, the author and prince of sin?

Not hard questions to answer, are they?

Who wouldn't say they reject Satan?!?

Hollywood has given us such extreme images of the devil and demonic possession that we can forget that the greatest ways

Satan works are through temptation and lies.

Not only does he work through it,

he's the author - the prince of temptation and lies.

Here's a definition of temptation I like:

temptation is when something we know is wrong is made to appear desirable, good or harmless.

Something we know is wrong looks desirable, good or harmless...that's temptation.

And it's something you and I struggle with every day.

It's the voice inside saying, *'go ahead, no one will know.'*

Or, *'it's no big deal.'*

Or, *'it's not really a sin, it's not wrong, just do it!'*

Temptation is also the voice telling us not to change, not to grow, to stay stuck and not make progress in our spiritual lives.... to settle for life as it is.

And I would add that Satan tempts us into making life all about ME!

My wants, my needs, my desires, my achievements come first.

SCREEN: Your life is not about you

But your life is not about you.

It is NOT about you.

It's a gift to be shared with others every day.

On the day you were baptized, God put his Holy Spirit within you
and the course of your life was set;

God pointed your heart and soul towards His Kingdom.

And Satan is the Father of Lies.

He tells us that we're broken and can't be fixed...that's a lie.

Tells us that our value and worth come from our accomplishments,
or from how much stuff we have or from what others think of us...all big lies.

And Satan tells us we aren't worthy of redemption....which is the biggest lie of all.

And so after stating that you reject all of that, I'll ask you to affirm what you believe:

SCREEN: Do you believe in God the Father?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?

**Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the Church, in the forgiveness of sins
and life everlasting?**

What are we being asked to profess in these statements?

These statements of faith are not abstract concepts.

They affirm the personal relationship God wants to have with us.

The first statement is really powerful: God is our Father.

Think of that - we are children of God; created in love and redeemed
by His Son and our brother Jesus!

We follow Jesus Christ: a person - God's beloved Son -
who seeks us out when we are lost, forgives our sins,
binds up our wounds, and teaches us how to be truly happy.

And as followers of Christ, everyday of our lives is a day to return God's love -
by listening to his voice, and sharing our faith so that you and I and others
can get to heaven.

We then profess that God's Holy Spirit is with us,
leading and guiding our way everyday.

And that we have the love and support of each other in the Church
and the grace of the Sacraments to keep us on the right path and

bring us back whenever we stray.

These baptismal promises remind you of your purpose and goal in life.

Tells you why you are on this earth and why you are here in this church now.

And we need these reminders because as I said,

from time to time anyone get side-tracked or distracted in life;

can lose focus and make life all about ME!

If this is how you see yourself today,

or if you're feeling stuck or bored or just could use a spiritual shot in the arm,

today is an opportunity for you to recommit.

Today, have the 20/20 vision God wants for you.

See Jesus for who he really is - God's son who offers what the world cannot give - peace, joy and a life of meaning.

Reject the temptations and lies of Satan so you can have a clear sight of where God is leading you.

Then renewed in faith not only will you see your purpose in life, but you will also inspire others.

God wants you - *needs you* - to be a light in the darkness, giving hope to those who are prisoners of fear, anxiety or worry.

Before I ask you to stand and renew your baptismal promises, I want us to take a moment of silence so you can think about what I'm inviting you to do.

God wants your answers to these questions to be given with boldness, conviction and intentionality.

And if you're unsure and want to take more time to really contemplate what you believe, there will be another opportunity later in this series to commit to Christ.

Let's take that moment of silence now. *(pause for one minute)*

If your faith makes you ready to renew your baptismal promises and be sprinkled with holy water, please stand.

SCREEN: I do!

*After asking the congregation to renew their promises,
Fr. Mike will sprinkle the congregation with holy water
then the Prayer of the Faithful follows*