

## Baptism of the Lord – 11 Jan, Matthew 3:13-17

"...And he saw the ***Spirit of God*** descending like a dove and coming upon him. And ***a voice*** came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

In today's Gospel account of Jesus' baptism, we recognize the ***Trinity present*** at this distinct moment in time: the Father speaking from the heavens, the Spirit descending as a dove, and the Son joining his brothers and sisters in line to receive the cleansing waters of baptism, though he had no sins to be cleansed. Jesus is the first of many to be baptized, ***He*** as the Head and ***we*** as the Body!

Bishop David J. Bonnar, of Youngstown, Ohio, writes in today's Reflection of Give Us This Day, "This spectacular event becomes an affirmation of the ***Triune God's love for us*** and a powerful reminder of our own baptism when we were named, claimed, and affirmed. Every time we dip our finger into the holy water font to recall our Christian baptism, we look again through this stunning window and reclaim this unmerited gift, pregnant with hope."

Bishop Bonnar was our presenter at the Archdiocese Convocation in West Virginia this past year. What caught my attention was the phrase, "Named, Claimed, and Affirmed." This year we will have, a growing number to be named at present counting, ten candidates for Confirmation and at least one or two for Baptism at the Easter Vigil.

Who are these people, both young and middle aged, single or getting married, that asked our parish if they could join our OCIA Program? Where do they hail from and why do they seek communion with the Roman Catholic Church? I ***hope because of you, our parishioners***. There will be three high school students from our Marianist Schools, Purcell-Marian and Moeller, who may join us at the Easter Vigil. Another candidate is getting married and wants to join the faith of her spouse and one is a university student. A young woman whose parents are members of our parish now wants to join us officially.

After all are confirmed, they will be Roman Catholic, just like us. My only hope is that they will not become "roaming" Catholics, even though we are all one Body of Christ through our baptism. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are all called to be "***Alter Christus***," or "***Other Christs***," energized through our Liturgy of the Word and Sacrament and sent out into the world as witnesses, or the Greek word more forcefully reminds us, as ***Martyrs***. We are too used to

thinking of martyrs as those who witness with their lives and giving their lives in the end. Hopefully we will do the same but without sacrificing our lives for the Lord.

It is not coincidence that the Christmas Season ends with Jesus' Baptism, where even he is sent out to begin his ministry after a short visit to the desert or wilderness, to bring the ***Good News*** to the Children of Israel, as emphasized by Jesus himself, when he told the Syrophoenician woman "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Jesus eventually realizes that his ministry is to all the corners of the world, as the prophet Isaiah reminds us, and Jesus reminds us after his resurrection with the commandment to Baptize all in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Between the Baptism of Jesus and the Easter Vigil, we will learn what the ministry of Jesus entails through his Words, Miracles, and Actions. We can say this much that it is ***Jesus' goal*** to draw us into the Trinitarian love as John's gospel hints, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me, as the I am in you." It is this intimacy with the Trinity that continues to send us out into the world as witnesses of God's love, as "Tabernacles of Flesh."