

## January 8/9: The Baptism of the Lord (C)

Dear friends and family of CCST,

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord closes the season of Christmas. Although all may put away all Christmas decors, the mark of Christmas remains. What is this mark? It is the mark that Jesus shared with us: our identity as beloved children of God.

One of the prayers of the rite of the Sacrament of Baptism reminds us about this divine mark we shared in Jesus. It says: "**(N.)** you have become a new creation and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven."

During the event of Jesus' baptism, we are told that the heavens are open and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove, and the voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Lk 3:22). The voice from heaven publicly declares his identity as the beloved Son, an identity where the power of his life and ministry came from, and draws everyone to himself.

In the same manner, sacramentally, we are anointed through the Holy Spirit during our baptism and are clothed with Christ. And the words of the Heavenly Father to Jesus are also for us, though not in an audible way, but still profoundly real that we are God's beloved children with whom he is well-please. We are given the power to be children of God, heir to the kingdom of God, holy people of God (cf Rom 8:17; Jn 1:12). It is a mark of who we are, and nothing can take it away; not even sin can undo it. No matter what happens, this identity remains forever. It is God's gratuitous gift without any merit of our own. It grows within a faith community, not by isolation but in union with the fellow baptized Christians and nourished through the Holy Eucharist.

As we liturgically close the season of Christmas, the work of darkness also tried to put its mark on our community – the mark of the thieves. Four televisions for the students' learning were stolen from four separate classrooms at St. Theresa School. It happened between the night of December 27 and the early dawn of December 28, 2021. It is presumed that the stolen TVs will be sold if not already been sold.

It is sad to hear about this incident in our community. My initial reaction was a shock, then the thoughts of finding the culprit and retrieving the stolen TVs. But on second thought, I am not sure if it is worth spending a good time and energy to get back the stolen items and deal with thieves. Dealing with thieves is a waste of time, for you don't know what will happen next. Sadly, we never run out of these kinds of people in our time who are overcome by darkness which should remind us to be cautious always for it may enter the doors of our homes without notice. However, spending time in silence and praying for those who refuse to receive the light of God and lose their way is worth doing for surprising reflections and understanding flow from them. Surprisingly, while this work of darkness, which has no future in itself, may seem to rob off the joy of the celebration of Christmas and New Year, those who heard the incident were inspired to help with a mark of generosity. Our community never runs out of generous people to respond to a need. We are very thankful to God for the light of grace shown through the mark of surprising goodness from our fellow baptized Christians.

May our identity of being beloved children of God continue to spread a mark of goodness and generosity to all. And let us pray that may the Heavenly Father bring upon his fatherly discipline to the person(s) who did this works of darkness to come to the light of his grace.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe



Let us come and adore  
him,  
and walk in His Light!