

18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, AUGUST 5, 2018
A REFLECTION ON BAPTISM

1st Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 [I will rain down bread from heaven for you]

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 178 ["The Lord gave them bread from heaven"]

2nd Reading: Ephesians 6:24-35 [Put on the new self that has been created in God's image]

Gospel: John 6:24-35 [I am the bread of life]

♪ **The Light of Christ has come into the world.**

The light of Christ has come into the world.

We all must be born again to see the Kingdom of God.

The water and the Spirit bring new life in God's love. ♪

The light of Christ has come into the world once again because we are welcoming a child named Isabella into the family of God. But her baptism is not just about her, it is a reminder that we are all responsible to live our Baptismal promises every day so she can learn how she is called to live.

Everything I have said in this Liturgy, and everything I will say about her Baptism
is also about each one of us.



When we see a baby about to be baptized, we are reminded that Jesus came into our world as a helpless baby, and needed to be loved and cared for the way any human baby is. He calls himself the "*Son of Man*" many times in the Gospels. We hear it in today's passage. In the language of the Bible "son of man" means "*The human one*". Jesus is the one who represents the best of what it means to be human.

Each one of us is called by our Baptism to live the words of St Paul in the 2nd reading, "*Put on the new self, [the new humanity], created in God's image, in justice and holiness.*"

To "put on the new self" means nothing less than to be fully human, as Christ is fully human. It was a constant theme of Pope John Paul II, now St John Paul, that Jesus represents the best of what it means to be human. This kind of humanity is what the world desperately needs today, and has always needed.

This is what we are called to model for this child. The ones who have lived that way are the ones we call saints, but we are ALL called to holiness. That is the clear teaching of the New Testament and of the Church today. The promises made in our name at Baptism - promises which are renewed at Confirmation and at every celebration of Easter - call us to be Christ for others, and to see Christ in others.

The love of a mother and father is a channel for the unconditional love of the God that Jesus called "Abba" which means "Daddy." We baptize *infants* to celebrate that kind of love - a love that is not earned. In order to live our baptism, to live as children of God, we need to receive love as a completely free gift, the way this baby receives the love of her parents, her family and her parish.

In the 1st reading, the people of Israel receive God's love as a gift. They are going through the desert & God provides manna, a kind of bread. They have to gather it every day, they can't store it up. If you read the verses omitted from today's passage, you can see that that's how God tests them. If they gather more than they need for the day, the excess rots.

We are called by our Baptism to receive what we need from the earth and each other, and then use the surplus to feed those in need. That's part of what it means when we pray, "Give us this day our DAILY bread." If enough people in our world took only what they needed, there would be enough to feed everyone in the world. There would be no hunger

Some people claim to be born again, or baptized in the Spirit - and that is a very good thing. But it's not just for charismatics or Pentecostals. The verse of the song I sang in the beginning reminds us,

*♪ "We all must be born again to see the Kingdom of God.
The water and the Spirit bring new life in God's love." ♪*

Like this little child, each one of us has already been baptized in the Holy Spirit, - & the Father & the Son. You will hear words that have been prayed over every one of us when we were baptized as I anoint her with the perfumed oil called chrism,

*God, the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST has freed you from sin,
given you a new birth by water & the HOLY SPIRIT, and welcomed you into GOD's holy people.*



The Readings we heard and the Baptism we celebrate today question us:
Am I really living the call of my Baptism today?
Can each of us say to Isabella today, "Look at the way I live my Baptismal promises.
That's the way you are called to live.

At the beginning of this Mass, I prayed a special blessing over Isabella as her family signed different parts of her body with the sign of the cross. It applies to each of us.

It began with these words:

Receive the sign of the cross on your forehead.

It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of love.

The cross of Jesus is the sign of the unconditional love of God through Christ.
I invite you now to close your eyes and imagine that Jesus is blessing each part of your body
and calling you to grow in love and faith and hope.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your lips, that you may respond to the word of God.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your heart, that Christ may dwell there by faith.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your ears, that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your eyes, that you may see the glory of God.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your hands, that Christ may be known in the work which you do.

~ Receive the blessing of God's love on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ.

We are all called to be Christ for others, even as we see Christ in others. We are called to become what we receive when we receive communion at Mass, we are all called to become fully human. I invite you to renew your own baptism each time you witness a child or adult being baptized and welcomed into the family of God, the Body of Christ.

We are living our Baptism when we allow ourselves to become what we eat. Then we will be living the words of Paul in the 2nd reading.

When I lift the host and the cup before communion, I say words based on something St. Augustine said at the Easter vigil, in his cathedral church in North Africa: "Behold the body and life-blood of Christ. See who you are, and be what you receive." That truth is so beautiful that it has to be set to music:

♪ *A-men. El Cuerpo de Cristo. A-men. La Sangre del Senor*
Eating your body, drinking your blood, we become what we receive. Amen, A-men

