

BAPTISM OF THE LORD, CYCLE A

Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7 + Acts of Apostles 10: 34-38 + Matthew 3: 13-17

“Launch Sunday” for DYNAMIC PARISH at Holy Spirit: January 12, 2020

Until his baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Jesus lives a “hidden life.” Then everything changes. The Father’s voice booming from heaven announces in a very public way, “This is my beloved Son!”

In some way Jesus knew this to be true before his baptism, but his experience at the Jordan awakens in him in powerful way who he is: he is more than the Son of Mary, more than the carpenter’s son. Jesus is God’s beloved son in whom God is well pleased.

Thus, his public ministry begins and flows from his baptism, as Jesus goes forth to awaken that identity in others, their ultimate identity as beloved children of God. He will do this with Matthew the tax collector and with Peter the fisherman, with Mary Magdalene and with countless others. Matthew and Peter and Mary came to love what Jesus loved in them, to see and receive their dignity as God’s beloved.

Then Jesus sends them forth to do the same.

This is what evangelization looks like:

Evangelization, sharing the Good News of God’s love, happens when awakened people awaken others to their true identity as children of God!

The challenge is that we live out our identity as beloved children of God within the limits of our humanity and our struggles with sin.

More often than not, instead of experiencing this communion with the Triune God forged in the fiery waters of our baptism, we instead live in alienation from our true identity.

Which is why we need someone to show us the way through our alienation to a life in communion.

Which is why we need someone—Jesus—to take away our sin and show us the way to live as a beloved child of God.

This is why a life of prayer is vitally important, because prayer is simply a conversation with One who loves us, who reminds us who we are as a child of God.

When we rest daily with Jesus in prayer we remember we are sons and daughters of God in the Son of God.

Jesus wants to teach us the way through our alienation, which is why ongoing study of his teachings form a solid foundation for our identity in Him as beloved children of Father.

This year the beloved child of God will teach us these truths through the good news of the evangelist Matthew.

Jesus, the new Moses in Matthew, has much to teach us and we have much to learn.

Loved by the Son of God who seeks us out wherever we may be hiding, we want to return that love and live out of our dignity as God's children by sharing generously the gifts we have been given in service of others and for the glory of God's kingdom.

We become "evangelists," sharers of the Great Good News, by awakening others to their child of God identity.

Empowered by the Spirit, the living waters of our baptism, the fire of divine life, we love others so generously and joyfully that they awaken to the truth of who they are—God's beloved sons and daughters.

Toward this goal and to this end, our parish is embarking on a 5-year journey of renewal with the help of Dynamic Catholic, so that each one of us may receive more fully God's great love for us in Christ Jesus and then share that love more generously with others.

A couple of months ago I was contacted by the Office of New Evangelization and Catechesis at the Archdiocese about a new initiative of Dynamic Catholic.

Some of you may know Dynamic Catholic through the books or events featuring its founder, Matthew Kelly.

This past Christmas I shared with you another of his books, "Rediscover the Saints."

Dynamic Catholic has been around for 10 years,

and this organization has spent the majority of that time researching and developing resources which help people rediscover the genius of Catholicism.

Dynamic Catholic is launching something new called, "Dynamic Parish."

Dynamic Parish is an effort to help every parish in America not just survive, but to truly become a parish on fire with the love of God.

When I met with the team at Dynamic Catholic, they made our parish an offer they would only extend to 5 parishes in our archdiocese.

In exchange for being part of a 5-year pilot study, Dynamic Catholic would provide about a million dollars worth of world-class resources in books, programs, parish best-practices, and regular coaching for the parish leadership team.

After discussing it with Deacon Paul, our parish's pastoral associate, the rest of the members of our parish staff, and our Pastoral Council, I said "yes."

I did not say yes because I thought taking our parish community to the next level would be easy.

It will certainly be challenging at times.

Rather, I said yes, because I believe our future at Holy Spirit Parish can be bigger and even brighter than our past.

I said yes because I want to see, along with a new church building, a renewal of the "living Church," those who make up this community of faith.

I said yes because I hope that our parish can become everything God intends it to be.

I said yes, because I know that alone as separate individuals we can accomplish little, but together, with God's grace, there is almost no height we cannot reach.

For more on Dynamic Parish, let's hear now from Matthew Kelly. (play video)

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi