

ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – JANUARY 10, 2021

Dear Parents and Families,

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus at around the age of 30. He receives a signal from the Father and the Holy Spirit that he is to inaugurate his public life. From now on in a special way he will be led by the Spirit. Jesus did not need to be baptized for any sinfulness. However, it appears he wanted to have solidarity especially with the ordinary people as he himself was immersed in the life-giving water of the Jordan River. Water is a sign of life.

How appropriate this is in this coming week when the Diocese of Youngstown will receive a new life with Bishop David Bonnar. He begins his public life as a Bishop and he is to lead us. This is a most optimistic sign from God.

This Diocese is also part of the United States. Our country has gone through turbulent times during this election. We are a divided nation. We can certainly pray that God brings us together as a nation and that he brings us together also as a vibrant diocese.

This week we also begin the Registration for our school. We certainly are expecting another year of growth. The Principal has suggested that classes K through 4th grade will probably fill up very quickly. We expect the total enrollment this year to exceed 200.

I want to thank all of you who have contributed so graciously during these times. Our weekly collections, our Christmas collections, and gifts coming in from the alumni of the school are most heartening and supportive. Financially, we are sound.

As we leave from base camp at the beginning of the year, I hope you are all optimistic. The Lord climbs upward with us and the Holy Spirit is certainly a guiding force. Jesus was especially led by the Spirit, and so may it be for us.

Another positive element will be the Confirmation of 19 students. This Tuesday Bishop elect David will be anointed with chrism and consecrated as Bishop. Six weeks later he will anoint with the same Chrism the 19 Confirmandi. Chrism is the sign of Christ.

I certainly expect this year will not only bring significant growth but also some storms. What these are, I cannot predict. But we shall weather them together but most especially rejoice as we watch our students grow and learn. It is so important that you count your blessings and minimize your loses. God wants us to be optimistic and joyful. This is certainly the word of our Holy Father Pope Francis. It is the *Joy of the Gospel*.

Mass and Communion

Until COVID is contained, we shall continue to give Communion 15 minutes before the weekend Masses for those people who are concerned of being in a congregation for any length of time. With Communion we give a prayer sheet. I also remind you that people are coming to the Wednesday evening Mass and daily Mass when the crowds are very low and you can sit quite distant from one another. COVID makes us agile.

Fr. Tom Acker, S.J.
January 10, 2021