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Dear Parishioners; HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I'm not sure when the cut off is for greeting people with Happy New Year, but this year, not only is Happy New Year a collective sigh and prayer, but because of the vaccine, the wish of our having a Happy New Year has never been so pregnant with hope and sincerity.

This Sunday is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The reason that we celebrate this feast at this time of the year is because it is what we call an Epiphany Event. Just as the arrival of the Magi at the Manger revealed the significance of the birth of Jesus, because of the proclamation of the Father at the Baptism of Jesus; "This is my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on Him.", and the descending of the Holy Spirit, we can say that we know who Jesus is, fully God and fully Human.

Some people might ask the question; "Why does Jesus want to be Baptised if He is without sin?" And the answer is so that Jesus is able to bless the action of Baptism, to infuse it with His grace in the same way that Jesus makes humanity holy by taking on our human nature at His birth.

In His Baptism, Jesus is assuring us of His covenant with us to the point that we can say that He has paid the ransom for us. And at the same time though, we know that we have to act on our Baptismal promises; to ask, to seek and to knock in order to make the best of Jesus' gift of salvation.

Personally though, I think that we Catholics are too quick to pivot from what Jesus has done for us and what we are supposed to do with God's grace. Meaning that sometimes we should just rest a while in the Truth of our Salvation, to restore ourselves so that we are certain to have some good to give away.

It is interesting that the Magi and the Shepherds do carry on with their journey and don't hang out and get in the way at the Manger. The

fact is, they are able to carry on with joy and renewed hope because they rested a while with the Holy Family. We need to do the same.

Which brings me to the question of New Year's Resolutions. Firstly, we can make self improvement resolutions anytime in the year and we know that Catholics do that especially in the Season of Lent. So if you are suffering from Covid fatigue, why not just give New Year's Resolution a pass this year? Or at least, if you feel compelled to make resolutions, why not just keep them to yourself. And that way if you miss your target, no one has to know but you. It is a way of looking out for ourselves and this year, that itself would be a very worthwhile resolution.

So if you are determined to pull up your socks, good for you. But if you are suffering from Covid overload, if you are "Weary and carrying heavy burdens", why not go easy on yourself and let Jesus' promises to walk with us encourage us now, and then make a plan for Lent. That way we won't be our own worst enemy and we won't pick on ourselves or set ourselves up for failure.

Life is hard enough right now but by the time Lent rolls around, life is going to be brighter and more hopeful, and we will have the energy to ask, to seek and to knock so that we will be prepared to celebrate the great Feast of our Salvation at Easter.

The following is a prayer from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians that reminds us of our belonging in Christ, the blessings of the Father and our dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all things;

I pray that You, God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give me the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You. That You would enlighten the eyes of my understanding, that I may know the hope of Your calling, the riches of glory of the saint's inheritance, and what is the exceeding greatness of Your power that You have for us who believe in You, according to the working of Your mighty power, which you worked in Christ. Amen.

May God be gracious to us and bless us, now and forever.

Pat Monette/Pastor