

HOMILY BAPTISM OF THE LORD YRC 2019

There is a story about a machinist many years ago that worked for Ford Motor Company here in Detroit. He was baptized as an adult and after that he decided that he needed to make restitution for some tools he had stolen from the Company in the past. The next day he brought the tools to his foreman, explained that he had just been baptized and wanted to make restitution, and asked for forgiveness. The foreman did not know what to do because this was so unusual, so he sent a telegram to Henry Ford, who was visiting a plant in Europe at the time. Henry Ford immediately sent a return telegram that read: "Dam up the Detroit River and baptize the entire city." We are changed by our Baptism. It changes who we are and it should change how we live.

Today we celebrate the solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord. We have been celebrating the incarnation, the birth of Jesus and now we are fast forwarding 30 years. We do not know much about the first 30 years of Jesus' life. Scripture scholars speculate that we do not know much about the first 30 years because nothing extraordinary happened. He was born and grew physically and mentally. He was guided by his parents and learned all of the things he needed to know to become a productive adult. He did all of the things that we have done or are in the process of doing. Then he was baptized by John. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus never sinned so he did not need a baptism of repentance so why was he baptized by John? I think he wanted to be one with the community at that time, and he still wants to be one with us in the present. Also, he was praying after he was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended upon him. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. His humanness received the Holy Spirit the way we receive the Holy Spirit in our Baptism, and he began his public ministry. His life changed.

We change as well through our baptism. We are purified of original sin. We receive the Holy Spirit. We become adopted daughter and sons of God. We belong to God and we belong to a Catholic Community. This makes us different from other people. Whether we can see ourselves as different or other people can see us as different depends upon how you live out your baptism. So how do you live

out your Baptism? I was watching a documentary about Pope Francis recently. By the way, I will be showing it on movie night in a couple of weeks. He said one of the main problems of our time is that we live our lives with our foot on the accelerator. Do you ever feel that way? This just depletes us physically, mentally and spiritually. We can become spiritually bankrupt. If we are going to be good sons and daughters of God we need take our foot off the accelerator and spend time with him, talking to him listening to him, and taking his advice. That means praying regularly. And the type of prayer I am talking about here is not reciting a memorized prayer, reading something or watching a video. Those are not bad things to do, but this type of prayer is different. I pray 1 ½ hours every day. At least 30 minutes is just sitting in God's presence. And I know you are now thinking: "Well you are a priest. Of course you do that, but I can't." I did not get any special prayer power through ordination. We all received the Holy Spirit through our baptism. I have been doing this for over 20 years, I started before I was ordained and it changed my life. If you take your foot off the accelerator a little every day and ask God how he wants you to spend your time, your life will change. My guess is you will stop doing some of the things you are doing on automatic pilot because they just are not important. Pope Francis says that life with your foot on the accelerator is destroying our families. If we want to be good family members we need to spend time with our families. Maybe you should play with your children instead of taking them to another organized activity. Maybe you should have the Sunday family dinner. What about being part of a Catholic Community? Maybe we should spend more time building up the Church. We do not belong to the Catholic Church we are the Catholic Church. It is easy to criticize the Church but I say we all work together to improve the face of the Catholic Church. The Church is what all of us make it. I have come to realize that our lives are shaped by all the little decisions we make every day. If we live our lives with our foot on the accelerator we are going to end up somewhere we do not want to be, and we will not understand how we got there. Take your foot off the accelerator. How are you going to live out your Baptism?