

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Parishioners,

This past Monday, we celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Thinking back, I realized that I have been baptizing babies for 53 years. I don't remember exactly when I started the habit of asking the godparents to not give birthday presents to their godchild. I challenged them, instead, to always send a present (preferably religious) on the anniversary of their baptism.

Our baptism brings us into the community of the Church, the forgiveness of original sin, and the right to receive all the other sacraments. It is a day on which we are marked by God as one of his blessed sons or daughters.

Last week, Pope Francis baptized 13 babies at the Vatican. He said, *"It is like a birthday because baptism makes us reborn in Christian life. That is why I advise you to teach your children the date of their baptism as a new birthday: that every year they will remember and thank God for this grace of becoming a Christian. ... Today is a day to celebrate, it is the celebration of the beginning of a beautiful Christian journey in which you will help your children to move forward. ... Thank you for your decision to bring them to be baptized."*

I got to thinking, (that could be dangerous), what would happen if we decided to celebrate the anniversary of our children's baptism instead of their birthday. The party, the presents, would remain and would give every child a reminder of who they are, a son or a daughter of God on high. It would remind them of their connection with the Church both here on earth and in the fullness of heaven. It will remind them of the great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) watching over them and all of us.



It might seem strange to them, and others, that they are not celebrating their day of birth but, rather, their baptismal day. It is obvious that our birthday is important, but our baptism, in so many ways, is more important.

Our society is becoming more and more focused on the individual. Focusing on our membership in our family, our parish, and our Church could be a strong reminder that we are never just ourselves, we are a member of a community. You have heard and read many times that we are not just ourselves. I am myself but I am also a son (of God and my human parents), brother, friend, priest — all of these do not diminish me, rather

enhance my identity.

If you do not know your date of baptism contact the parish where you were baptized and request a copy of your baptism record with the notations (confirmation, marriage). New customs can be a bit difficult to implement, but worth it. For us who are getting long in the tooth, this could help us to not focus on our age, rather on our affiliation and incorporation into the Church, the great cloud of witnesses, and most importantly to when we became a son our daughter of God on high.

I fear that some sell themselves short when it comes to religious issues; such as, "I have no real talents when it comes to religion," or "I could never speak out in this area," etc. Our baptism gives you and me the right and the tools to do just that. We need to build on the foundation God has established. Look at the kaleidoscope of our saints — soft spoken, bombastic, contemplative, well-educated, and young to the elderly, etc. etc. etc.

We are all living in a very secular society and we all must more diligently work to bring God's goodness into our lives. Switching to baptism parties would be a good start.

pace-bene,

Msgr. Bill