



Dear Friends in Christ,

Today in our Gospel reading for this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, John the Baptist says about Jesus: One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

This is the scriptural foundation of our Christian baptism.

John was a humble man. He knew that he was not the Messiah, but he also knew that he was called to prepare the way for him. He baptized the people in water, so that Jesus could fully baptize them with fire and the Holy Spirit.

The Church is born in baptism. In baptism, we are forgiven for all sins: original (and actual in the case of an adult catechumen). We are adopted into the family of God, and given sanctifying grace to live and grow in holiness. We are marked as Christ's own forever, and called to a life of holiness.

The tremendous blessing of this sacrament includes its grafting of each one of us to Christ, and its outpouring of the Holy Spirit into us such that we are then disposed to receive additional graces and blessings throughout our lives. These graces assist us in our journey to our final goal – union with Christ in eternity. Baptism cleanses and prepares us for life in Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The calling and dignity given to us in baptism is not lost even if we turn away from the grace and blessings. This is why we never "re-baptize" someone who has fallen away and then returns to the Church. While baptism does not guarantee that a person will go to heaven after they die, it does mark them for Christ in a way that cannot be erased.

John prepared people with a symbolic water baptism. Jesus gave them life and the Holy Spirit. Our sacramental baptism is not merely symbolic, but actually accomplishes what it represents. It is the first step in our lives as People of God. We are cleansed and marked, so that we can be filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit and be used for God's glory. It is the beginning of our journey with, and to, Christ. It is the foundation of the other sacraments we receive, and it is by this sacrament that we participate in the full life of the Church. Our goal is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Only in baptism do we receive the grace that makes that journey possible.

One person who made that journey in a spectacular way, yet with humility was the Canadian saint André Bessette or St. André of Montreal, a brother of the

Congregation of the Holy Cross, whose memorial was this past Wednesday (January 6). Born in 1845 with the name Alfred, he was a sickly child (and remained so through most of his life), and was orphaned at age 12. For four years beginning at age 18, he worked at textile mills in Connecticut, and then returned to Canada, where his pastor the Rev. André Provençal noticed his strong faith.

At the recommendation of that pastor, he became a novice in the Congregation of the Holy Cross at age 25, taking as his religious name the name of his pastor (André). Because of his bad health and because he could barely read and write, he was only allowed to make his religious profession at the insistence of the archbishop of Montreal.

During his formation as a brother, he was assigned the duty of porter or doorkeeper at the Collège Notre-Dame, a job he would keep for forty years. His menial duties included answering the door, and also washing floors and windows, cleaning lamps, carrying firewood and serving as a messenger.

In greeting visitors as the porter and in visiting the sick at home, he would invite them to pray to St. Joseph, to whom he had a tremendous devotion. Many of them began to experience physical healings, and his reputation spread. In his modesty, he always ascribed any healings to St. Joseph's intercession before God, and not his own prayers. With a humility reminiscent of John the Baptist, he would say "It is St. Joseph who cures. I am only his little dog."

Over time, his dream of a shrine to St. Joseph became a reality. The first small shrine was built in 1904 with \$200 he raised by giving 5-cent haircuts to students, as well as collecting small amounts in other ways. So many pilgrims began to arrive at the small oratory, that he was released from his duties as porter in 1909 so he could attend to them full-time. The flood of pilgrims was such that that twenty years later, construction was begun on a much larger basilica. The chapels of the larger St. Joseph's Oratory are filled with the crutches of those healed with the help of Brother André's prayers.

Towards the end of his life, Brother André needed four secretaries to answer the 80,000 letters he was receiving each year. When he died at age 91 on January 6, 1937, a million people paid their respects at the coffin of the sickly man who healed so many.

Some relatives of St. André are parishioners here, and during the Mass on his memorial, I wondered to myself what it would be like to have a canonized saint in the family. Then God reminded me that we are all relatives of St. André. Through our baptism into Christ Jesus, we (who are baptized) are all children of God and so brothers and sisters of all the saints, and of everyone who has ever

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been baptized. So not only can we say we have a saint in the family, but that we have every saint and future saint in the family.

In simple terms, a saint is someone who has lived out their baptismal call to holiness. Saints are those who have allowed the Holy Spirit, given to them at baptism, to work its power in them, leading them to the union with Christ that is our goal, our life's purpose, the reason for our existence.

Let's take encouragement from the life of St. André Bessette, and know that if we allow God's grace to work in us, He can do amazing things in and through us, despite whatever obstacles we might face. Brother André was orphaned, sick, poor, uneducated, rejected by some in powerful positions (although also supported by others), and given menial tasks for forty years. And yet, through the grace of his baptism, he became an effective instrument of God's healing power. Our own challenges will be different, as will be our particular calling. But God's grace at work in us can and is supposed to make us saints, if we get out of His way. As John the Baptist said "He must increase; I must decrease." (Jn 3:30) This is in no way a diminution of our worth or individuality but actually the way we become our most authentic selves and fulfill our reason for being.

I am confident and unafraid.

My strength and my courage is the LORD... (Is. 12:2bc)

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Marco

VIRTUAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION WITH SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR During this time of physical separation, Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center is providing virtual retreats so that you can connect with others and feed your soul. Currently, these programs are being offered at no cost, and a suggested donation of only \$75 per person is greatly appreciated. For more information and to register, go to ourladyofbethesda.org.

NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE TO END ABORTION The National March For Life will take place in Washington DC on the National Mall, starting at 12 noon, January 29th. If there is enough interest, there may be a bus to the March leaving from Immaculate Heart of Mary Church at 10 am. To reserve a seat on the bus call, text or email Mark Baysinger ASAP, but no later than January 8th at nbay9@hotmail.com, 240-925-2677

THANK YOU! The members of SVDP of IHM would like to thank everyone that participated in the SVDP 2020 Christmas Sponsorship Program. This was most definitely a different year due to COVID-19, but as always, our community came together in different ways. Due to your generosity, 80 families were helped and enjoyed Christmas that much more. Thank you goes to each and everyone that supported our program. May your New Year be filled with peace and joy, healing and as much goodness that you show to others that need help within our community. And May God Bless You Always!

HELP OUR MARRIAGE Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue, or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille (pronounced retro-vi with a long i) helps couples through difficult times in their marriages. This program has helped many couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage. For confidential information or to register for the upcoming program beginning with a weekend on January 29th - January 31st, 2021, please visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.org, call (443) 400-7017, or email: 3015@HelpOurMarriage.org

RIVER BOAT CRUISE The OLSS Travel Club has rescheduled their Rhine riverboat cruise for July, 2022, and would like you to join them. A \$400 pp deposit (\$200 is refundable) is required to hold a cabin, with no further payment until Spring, 2022. Currently there is a \$1,000 pp discount if booked before December 31, 2020. Delight in Dutch windmills, German castles, and fine French wine on this 7 day cruise. Contact Mary Beth Brown for more details: marybeth@bytheseatravel.com ~or~ 443-623-6368.

LOYOLA ON THE POTOMAC Ignatian Weekend Retreats "We Journey in Hope" January 8-10 (Men), January 22-24 (Men), January 29-31 (Men and Women), February 26-28 (Men), March 5-7 (Men), March 12-14 (Women). The weekend retreat fee is \$245/ \$195 for first time retreatants or young adults (35 years and younger).



If you or someone you know is inquiring about the Catholic faith, please let them know to email our RCIA coordinator at RCIA@ihmrcc.org.

GARDEN AND GROUNDS MINISTRY We have various projects around the church that need to be completed. Any adult or child would be welcome. If you want to volunteer, please contact Martha Davie by phone or text at 240-434-3510. Thank you!

JANUARY 9 & 10, 2021



January 11 — January 17

Monday	Heb 1:1-6/Ps 97:1-2, 6-7, 9/ Mk 1:14-20
9:00 am	Tom Grden (D)
Tuesday	Heb 2:5-12/Ps 8:2, 5-9/ Mk 1:21-28
5:30 pm	Alexander Schad (D)
Wednesday	Heb 2:14-18/Ps 105:1-4, 6-9/ Mk 1:29-39
9:00 am	Msgr. Francis G. Kazista (D)
Thursday	Heb 3:7-14/Ps 95:6-11/ Mk 1:40-45
5:30 pm	Fr. William F. Goude, Jr. (D)
Friday	Heb 4:1-5, 11/Ps 78:3, 4, 6-8/ Mk 2:1-12
9:00 am	Gerard Mumfrey (D)
Saturday	Heb 4:12-16/Ps 19:8-10, 15/ Mk 2:13-17
9:00 am	Rev. Michael Dolan (L)
4:00 pm	All IHM Parishioners
Sunday	1 Sam 3:3-10, 19/Ps 40:2, 4, 7-10/ 1 Cor 6:13-15, 17-20/Jn 1:35-42
8:30 am	Pat Wilson (D)
11:15 am	Margaret Winters (D)
1:00 pm	Alexander Schad (D)

ALTAR FLOWERS/SANCTUARY CANDLES If you would like to donate the Altar Flowers or Sanctuary Candles in memory or for special intentions of a loved one, please call the Parish Office or email at cindy@ihmrcc.org.

IHM MUSIC MINISTRY If you are interested in sharing your musical talents with the parish, there is a place for you in this ministry! Please call Mary at 240-434-8876 (leave a message!).

SING ALONG DURING MASS For those attending Mass in church, online, or in the parking lot, please join us in song at songs.ihmrcc.org.

LIVESTREAM MASS Join us for our livestream Masses: the 4 pm Mass on Saturdays in English, and 1 pm on Sundays in Spanish at mass.ihmrcc.org.

APOLOGETICS CLASS The next class is on January 11th from 7 pm to 8:30 pm at St. John's in Hollywood, in the St. Jude Room, of the Msgr. Harris Center. The next class will be "Spanish Inquisition: Fact and Fiction" Class is also available via Zoom: see the St. John's parish website.

COVID-19 VACCINES Throughout the past few weeks, we have heard a lot of information about the testing and development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. There have been continuous conversations within the Catholic community about the safety and morality of these vaccines, so we are glad to say that both Moderna and Pfizer have developed vaccines using mRNA, and without the use of controversial fetal cell lines. Similarly, both vaccines have been tested in an ethical way that is in line with previous moral statements made by Pope Benedict XVI and the Pontifical Academy for Life. Receiving either vaccine would be morally permissible in the Catholic Church and would also be an important pro-life decision that would help to defend the most vulnerable. Through our own personal actions and decisions, we can help to protect our neighbors from the coronavirus pandemic.

For more information on the vaccines and their development, you can review a *Catholic Standard* interview with Dr. David Diemert, a medical doctor and scientist who is part of a team researching a potential COVID-19 vaccine. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has also published a memo on this issue, and you can find more information on this topic at their website usccb.org. Finally, the Archdiocesan Office of Life Issues recently published an article with more information in the Catholic Standard at <https://cathstan.org/>.

BULLETIN DEADLINE Please email your submission to bulletin@ihmrcc.org by Wednesday at 10:00 am prior to the Sunday of publication. All entries are subject to editing.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

THE SICK

THAT THEY MAY BE RESTORED TO FULL HEALTH

Audrey Somers, Anthony Thomas, Louise Shafer, Helen Daye, Kathleen Floyd, Mary Oliver, Judith Ann Allgood, Vince Guerin, Regan Corliss, Jack Makin, Belle Riddell, Corrine Geraty, Jane Keyon, Sarah Crecelius, Linda F. Gieser, Patricia V. Rose, Jim Brown, Ralph Gough Sr.,

Please note: names will remain on these lists for two months, unless otherwise notified. To keep a name on the list, please resubmit by contacting bulletin@ihmrcc.org, or call the Parish Office.

PAPAL PRAYER INTENTION FOR JANUARY

May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.

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