

Daily Baptism: Renewing Your Spiritual Vows to the Lord

Sunday Sermon
January 29, 2012
A. Hanna

The Gospel

- ❖ In today's Gospel, we hear a story about Jesus and John baptizing many in Judea. John baptized many people, and at one point, they questioned him.
- ❖ John's defense:
"A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. **He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.** (Jn 3: 27-31)
- ❖ The one who does the baptism (Abouna) is the best man in our spiritual weddings. He is the connector between us and the Lord. And of course, our wedding is a day we never forget!

Who Remembers Their Baptism?



Baptism

- ❖ Baptism and Confirmation are the only two sacraments we experience as young babies
- ❖ The choice is not ours at that time
- ❖ Our experience of the other sacraments is up to us (marriage, communion, confession, and so on)
- ❖ Many of our SMSV family were baptized as adults, and there is something very special about that, as it is a conscious decision

Baptism as a Promise

- ❖ For those of us who were baptized as babies (and even those as adults) we need to remember that we made a commitment to the Lord at that time
- ❖ Let each day, then, be a renewal of those vows – a new baptism with the rising of each sun.
- ❖ My goal today is to think of our daily baptism as a renewal of vows in our Spiritual Marriage to the Lord.
- ❖ Some of the verses we will explore will be the vows we make this week.
- ❖ Please Note: Some of the verses come from today's readings, some from yesterday's

“I will not put the world first”

- ❖ We start with one of the hardest vows
- ❖ We live in the world 24 hours a day
- ❖ Our lives, families, friends, jobs, passions, and goals mean a lot to us, and it's only natural to place them on a pedestal
- ❖ The Lord clearly tells us to put Him first... always!
- ❖ From Saturday's Gospel:
“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:35-38)

“I will not value earthly things”

- ❖ Similar to the first vow, and just as challenging
- ❖ In this world of consumerism, constant exposure to advertising, celebrity lifestyles, jealousy, obsession with the physical/outwardly, and **instant gratification** it's difficult not to get caught up in the race
- ❖ From Saturday's Pauline Epistle:
“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us [...] hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (Rom 8 18-25)
- ❖ From today's Acts:
"Be saved from this perverse generation." (said by Peter while baptizing) ... Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. (Acts 2:40-45)

“I will do good, love my enemies, and fear no one but You”

- ❖ If all we had to do was love God, it would be easy. It's not difficult to love God, Who is loving, Who sacrifices, and Who watches over all of us.
- ❖ But He wants more from us – something harder. To love all people, regardless of their intentions. To do good, so that they know we are Christians. And above all, to fear no man.
- ❖ From today's Catholic epistle:
“If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” (1 Jn 4: 20-21)
- ❖ From Saturday's Catholic epistle:
For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. **Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.** (1 Pet 2: 15-17)

“I will expect and accept persecution”

- ❖ God doesn't sugar-coat what loving Him might mean. If you love Him, you will be persecuted.
- ❖ This goes back to not valuing the world over him – even those things/people in our life that mean the most to us should not be valued above Him.
- ❖ From Saturday's Gospel:
“You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. **But not a hair of your head** shall be lost. By your patience **possess** your souls.” (Luke 21:16-19)
- ❖ A theme is becoming clear: the greatest possession we can have is not of this world. The greatest possession we have is our soul! If you take such good care of your possessions, you should do at least the same for your soul.

“I will live in the light”

- ❖ A recent study conducted at the University of Toronto led to an interesting “discovery” – that people in well-lit rooms are more likely to be honest as compared to those in dimly-lit rooms.
- ❖ Participants in the dimly-lit room were more likely to be dishonest
- ❖ While this was an interesting study, God revealed this truth to us long before the scientists at U of T! If we live in the light – in transparency and in honesty – we will be rewarded in heaven.
- ❖ From Sunday Matins:
“...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (Jn 3: 19-21)
- ❖ If you are living right, you should have no reason to be ashamed.

A Summary of Vows

- ❖ Imagine you were about to get married or enter a life-long contract with someone, and they asked you to do the following:
 1. Put me first before anyone or anything else
 2. Value me more than your possessions
 3. If you really love me, you'll love everyone in the world, including your enemies and those who mean you harm.
 4. Fear me.
 5. Accept the fact that being with me means other people will want to hurt you.
 6. Live honestly and do not hide anything from me.

Some of these vows might seem reasonable – others are very challenging.

“But it’s too hard...”

- ❖ Although some of these vows seem challenging and many people might look at them and say, “I want to get out of this marriage! It’s too hard!”, there is an amazing reward for he or she who enters into this contract.
- ❖ Like any relationship, like any marriage, like any true commitment... it won’t be easy. However, the reward of UNCONDITIONAL and EVERLASTING LOVE and EVERLASTING LIFE makes these vows a small price to pay.
- ❖ To those who say “but it’s too hard”, I say...

Don't be a baby!



Our Daily Baptism

- ❖ For anyone who is married, like me, you know that the wedding only happens once... but the marriage happens every day. We have to choose our spouses and re-commit to them every day.
- ❖ Similarly, we are only baptized once... but our commitment to the Lord must be renewed every day as well.
- ❖ Let us remember our vows for this week:

I will not put the world and earthly things before Him;

I will do good, love my enemies, and fear no one but Him;

I will expect and accept persecution from others for His sake;

I will live in the light, in truth and honesty.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.