

Message from our Spiritual Director

Easter: A Time to Renew Baptismal Promise and Reclaim Responsibilities

Easter is the feast of New Life. It is the victory of Jesus over sin and death. It is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. We are redeemed by the passion and death of Jesus Christ our Savior. By His love, sacrifice and death, we are given a New Life.

Renewal of Baptismal promise remains a central focus during the celebration of Easter liturgy. It is through the Sacrament of Baptism that believers enter a covenant with God. Jesus calls it a 'New Birth' (Jn 3:5) through which one enters the Kingdom of God.

Theologically, Baptism is a passage, a cleansing, a new life and an incorporation. It is a **passage** to a new world. Church fathers call it 'illumination.' From the darkness of sin, we are brought into the light of God, light of Christ. In Greek the word baptism means 'immersion.' Through Baptism Christians are immersed in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. Plunged in the waters of Baptism, a baptized is freed from the slavery of sin and death and given the freedom of the children of God. It is a **cleansing**. We are liberated from the original sin and personal sin. Cleansing takes place in our souls. It is a **new life** of water and the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us children of God. It is an **incorporation**. "You are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Baptized are incorporated into Christ and His Church.

Through the anointing with the sacred chrism, the baptized share in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. In very simple ways we can fulfill this threefold mission. The **priest** offers sacrifice to God on behalf of people. Baptized share in priestly function when, out of love we offer our entire life to God as a pleasing sacrifice. Leading prayers (in family and society), praying for the needs of others (stranger, immigrants, homeless, broken hearted) and their salvation are some examples of a priestly responsibility. The **prophet** is a spokesperson for God. When we proclaim the Gospel by words and deeds, we are fulfilling the prophetic call. In the face of violence and injustice, speak the Gospel of justice, love and reconciliation. Not to forget that prophets were rejected for being the voice of God, but rejection even made them stronger. We share in the royal function of Christ as **King**. The King is to serve his people and not to dominate. Jesus came to serve and not be served. The Rule is to serve as Jesus did with mercy, compassion and forgiveness. Each time we fight against the forces of evil through a life of selfless service and teach the world to live with the spirit of the Gospel, we fulfil the kingly office of Christ.

As we renew our baptismal promise this Easter, let us also reclaim our baptismal responsibilities and live like Easter people. Baptismal call requires that all of us seek ways to imitate Jesus, the priest, prophet and king in whose footsteps we follow. We believe that when we live out our baptismal call, we are living out our participation in the mission of Christ. Just imagine how the Church and society will be if all the baptized live out their Baptismal calling!

Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed! Happy Easter!

God bless,
Br Manoj, OFM