

Publication Date: January 4, 2021

Reflection Date: January 10, 2021 - The Baptism of the Lord

Let Us Stir Up Hope

Image by Hans Braxmeier from Pixabay

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the [Baptism of the Lord](#). Through the action of coming to the Jordan River to be baptized by John, Jesus humbly placed himself once again as one with us, not above us, and as being one with our humanity. He who is God and born without sin had no need to receive the baptism of repentance from John. Once again, we see Jesus empty himself in order to embrace the full will of God. “Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations...”



Jesus, in his ministry to proclaim the Kingdom of God, can be said to have “stirred up things.” He spoke out against the many injustices that he encountered as he traveled and taught. He stood with and healed persons who were rejected and alienated because they suffered from an illness or a disease. He showed compassion and mercy to those who were being persecuted by others, like the woman caught in adultery. Our baptismal call to proclaim the kingdom means to follow in the footsteps of Christ and to continue to stir things up.

In baptism, we are immersed, buried with Christ to arise a new creation, one with Christ in God. Sometimes I wonder if baptism is simply seen as the sacramental event that happened on a particular date, time and place as noted on our baptismal certificate. Is it simply a past event in our lives or are we living with an awareness that we are immersed in the presence of Christ? So often, like fish in the ocean, we who have entered the baptismal waters of Christ seem unaware of the divine life and love in which we are immersed.

Through living our baptism we are called to be hope and to bring about and be the justice of Christ in our world. Baptized in Christ we are called to be light, to open the eyes of those blinded by selfishness, greed and hatred, to bring out those held captive by the sin of racism and the oppression of others. May we truly know ourselves as beloved of God and walk in the Spirit of light and truth.

Pope Francis, in *Fratelli Tutti*, writes, “I invite everyone to renewed hope, for hope “speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile”. Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope.” [55]

Sr. Margaret Magee, OSF
FAN Board Member

Suggested Action:

Reflect this week on your own baptism. If you're able, find photos of it and talk to people who were there. Contemplate the immersion into Christ's love.

Suggested Petitions:

May we continue to rely on the word of God to open and strengthen our hearts so as to know deeply the perfect love God has for each of us. We pray...

Through our own baptism, may we yearn to share in our lives the justice and love with which Jesus lived. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**O God, whose Only Begotten Son
has appeared in our very flesh,
grant, we pray, that we may be inwardly transformed
through him whom we recognize as outwardly like ourselves.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Awareness Month

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention month when we work to educate ourselves and our friends about this modern-day slavery. We also observe a day of prayer on January 11th. Here are some resources for you to use this month.

CCOAH is the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking. The group has published this [2021 Toolkit](#) which includes background, resources and prayer suggestions for you to use as you celebrate and educate others.

[U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking](#) is a collaborative, faith-based national network with whom FAN works to promote educational resources and ways to take action. Each month, a newsletter is published with a new theme which we share in our newsletters. The archived issues of the [Stop Trafficking Newsletter](#) are on our website.

[Hope for Justice](#) is an organization which has a library of resources including downloadable



posters that can be printed and social media graphics to share. [Click here to find these resources](#).

Our own Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF will be participating with the [Migration and Refugee Services](#) campaign of the USCCB and the [Brunetti Human Trafficking Academy](#) in a virtual vigil for victims of human trafficking on February 8th, the feast of Josephine Bakhita. We will keep you informed as plans are finalized.

Above all, we must continue to pray, educate, and advocate for all victims of human trafficking.

World Day of Peace: Friday, January 1, 2021

Photo credit: ANSA, Vatican News

Established by Pope St. Paul VI in 1967, the first World Day of Peace was observed on January 1, 1968. This Friday, Pope Francis urges all “men and women of goodwill” to foster a culture of care in his message for the [54th World Day of Peace](#), which was released last week.



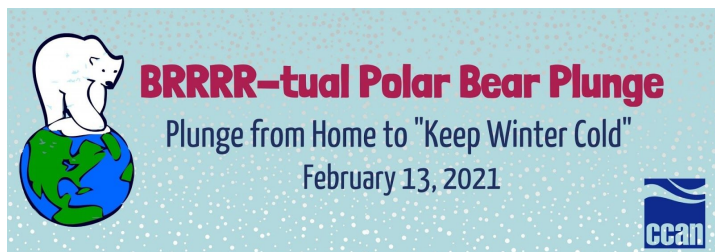
The Holy Father traces the evolution of the Church’s *Culture of Care* and offers the Church’s social doctrine as a “compass” to advance the “path of fraternity, justice and peace between individuals, communities, peoples and nations.”

Recognizing a surge in various forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia, and wars and conflicts, the Pope stresses that, “There can be no peace without a culture of care,” noting how the “massive Covid-19 health crisis” has aggravated deeply interrelated crises such as those of the climate, food, the economy and migration.

Read the [entire World Day of Peace message](#) here.

Polar Bear Plunge Goes Virtual - Take the Plunge With Us!

In 2020, we witnessed more than 4 million acres burn across California and a record-breaking hurricane season. We need to send a clear message to our leaders that climate change must be a priority in 2021. This year, for the first time ever, the [16th Polar Bear Plunge](#) will be VIRTUAL and NATIONAL on February 13, 2021. **Learn more by [watching this video](#).**



Supporters across the country will have the opportunity to choose how they will be taking the plunge with us. You'll be joining Bill McKibben, Rev. Lennox Yearwood, and hundreds of other climate activists. There are options like a "climate bucket challenge" or picking a pond or creek near your house. Some ideas to consider:

- jumping into an icy cold bath or kiddie pool
- dumping a bucket of ice water over yourself
- going to a nearby body of water like a local creek or pond (if you choose this option learn more details at "[About the Plunge](#)")

The most important thing is that you and icy water come together for a brief moment on February 13th. Just like a charity fun run, plunge participants take pledges from their friends and family to support CCAN's vital climate work. **Support the plunge by participating as a part of FAN's Team!** [Let us know if you will be plunging.](#)

Register Today for the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering

Registration is open for the [2021 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering](#) which will take place virtually this year, from February 6-9. The theme is "[Make justice your aim \(cf. Is. 1:17\): Rebuilding Together.](#)" We will pray, learn and advocate together on the disparities revealed by COVID-19 and new models of justice and solidarity.



**Catholic
Social
Ministry
Gathering
2021**

For more than 30 years, the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (CSMG) has brought together hundreds of participants whose faith inspires them to address pressing current domestic and global challenges affecting our most vulnerable brothers and sisters at home and around the world.

This year's virtual gathering will include inspiring speakers, workshops, opportunities for practice-sharing, virtual advocacy visits and more.

[Find more information and register by clicking here.](#)