

Christmas Feast of the Baptism of the Lord ~ January 11, 2026

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7; Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10; Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:14-17
Gathering Hymn, JESUS TO JORDON'S WATERS CAME; Presentation of Gifts: BY THE WAKING OF OUR HEARTS

Homily: Father Ed Hislop

For with the opening of this Council a new day is dawning on the Church, bathing her in radiant splendor. It is yet the dawn, but the sun in its rising has already set our hearts aglow. All around is the fragrance of holiness and joy..."

Pope John XXIII Second Vatican Council Opening Address

Words spoken a lifetime ago by a simple Pope many thought would be insignificant, or one who could not inspire a new vision, filled with hard work, spirited renewal, and a wonder-filled willingness to move forward with that unrelenting **"vision of hope,"** and transformation. The Spirit of God, on that day, *"came sailing down"* on the Church, and on the whole world! And here, among us, in those early years, which sometimes feel so long ago, that same Spirit of God descended and we all heard the voice coming from the heavens. We believed, we acted with an enthusiastic spirit and began to live that vision of hope, even as some feared or resisted it or could not feel the Spirit or hear the promise.

And here we are today, some who first felt that new vision of hope, others who benefit from the vision. Here we are people from every parish around us, people from every part of our country and other parts of our world. To this place, as we prayer in the Eucharistic Prayer, *we have been summoned before God, whose compassion gathers his children, scattered throughout the world.* Eucharistic Prayer III

Here we are becoming someone new; here we are because the vision we saw and the voice we heard coming from the heavens has shaped our life, strengthened our faith, and renews our resolve to move forward with loving service and caring compassion. We are here because we believe in the promise *"for the vision still has its time, if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come..."* Habakkuk 2:3 So in song we will pray: *"By the waking of our hearts, by the stirring of our souls, may the Spirit of God abide and bring us together in Christ."* **IT IS A VISION OF HOPE!**

So, here in this place, in this "house for the Church," we work to live that vision, to be and become a **"PROMISE OF LIFE!"** Here we believe and express the mystery and the promise of the Christmas feast, as

Saint John reminds us, *"the word of God made flesh"*—flesh and blood, true and real. *"This is what we proclaim to you, what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched—we speak of the word life."* 1 John 1. Life is human flesh and blood, life is spirit and soul, life is the wonder of creation, life is beauty and mystery, struggle, and love; doubt and fear; life is sharing the breath of God; and being the work of God's creation. Life is the Word of God made flesh. Made flesh in the fruit of the earth, in the body, mind, heart and soul of people. Made flesh in the caring and loving artful "work of human hands" shaping mystery, in this place of vision, in this house of wonder, where everything that is seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted must be special, genuine, true, cared for and beautiful. We cannot be satisfied with anything less. Here we must always strive for the best we can bring together rather than what is compromised or less noble. Environment and Art In Catholic Worship #32 In this house we are, as Isaiah reminds us, grasped by the hand of God, here we are formed to be "a light;" a light to the neighborhood, the Missoula community, our Diocese, and to the whole church: *"By the waking of our hearts, by the stirring of our souls..."* a light to embrace and become for all **"A PROMISE OF LIFE."**

That vision of hope and promise of life nurtures and nourishes in us a deeper **SPIRIT OF SERVICE.** The beauty and wonder of this house, filled with the artful work of human hands will remind all who gather here that we are, in the words of Isaiah, formed as a covenant to the people, a light for all, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners and to bring light to those who live in darkness, *"By the waking of our hearts."*

The house, this place of the Lord's Table, is not a place of hiding but a place to be inspired, challenged, and renewed in hope, vision, life and service. A place so true and beautiful, that what is so untrue, ugly, and frightening in our world and nation today can be named, and all will be challenged *"to act uprightly"* to *"bring forth justice."*

We who gather here *are the "Church;"* and as the Church we are servant to the world, committed to be sign, witness and instrument of the reign, wonder and beauty of God. The environment of our worship, the beauty and wonder of the house, can be nothing less than the best we can offer, because what we do here, and who we become here, has the loving power of transforming our spirit, renewing life and bringing hope, not only for ourselves but for all who long for a new vision, promise and spirit. So now we move forward with new vigor and dedicated spirit, *with awakened hearts and souls stirred*, to re-create this house for the church.

as a place to meet the Lord, to encounter one another, to hear the cry of the poor and reach out with open hearts. Like that vision of Pope John, *a new day is dawning on us*. The challenge of the environment we create is the final challenge of Christ himself: *We must make ready until He comes in glory*.

"... the sun in its rising has already set our hearts aglow. All around is the fragrance of holiness and joy..." "By the waking of our heart and the stirring of our soul," listen, a voice is coming from the heavens: We are **A VISION OF HOPE, A PROMISE OF LIFE, A SPIRIT OF SERVICE.**



**A VISION of Hope,
A PROMISE of Life,
A SPIRIT of Service.**

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