

Dear Friends,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your generosity for all the cards and gifts I received for Christmas. I definitely have enough candy to last me until Lent.

On this weekend, as we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, we begin Ordinary Time in our liturgical year. This will be our last weekend with the trees and banners in the nave of the church, but we have decided to keep up the nativity and the festive banners on the altar for a bit longer this year. You might consider it a time of Christmas bursting into the ordinariness of our daily lives as we move on from this great feast. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will celebrate the Presentation of the Lord, traditionally known as Candlemas. With that celebration, we round out the celebrations of Jesus' infancy, and with that transition, we will remove the banners and nativity scene. God willing, we will have the poinsettias around a bit longer to enjoy, as a faithful elf is very diligent in watering them, and I hope that as long as they stay warm and watered, they could last a while.

It is interesting that we celebrate the Baptism of Lord, which happened when our Lord was a grown man of 30, in this time focused on His infancy and childhood. In the ancient Church, before Christmas was celebrated at all, the liturgy celebrated the Epiphany. By the fourth century, both Christmas and Epiphany had been set as separate feasts in many dioceses and in 567, at the council of Tours, the Church set Christmas and Epiphany as feast days on Dec. 25 and Jan. 6. On January 6, the ancient Church would celebrate the Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord, and Wedding at Cana all on the same day. These three events in the life of Jesus are all manifestations of His presence as Emmanuel, God with us. Each of these mysteries of Christ's life show that heaven has come to earth, God has become man. Epiphany is the first manifestation of Jesus to the nations as savior of the whole world. At the Baptism, the Father's voice is heard saying, "This is my beloved son," manifesting the relationship between Jesus and His Heavenly Father. At the Wedding at Cana, Christ's divinity is revealed in His first miracle, changing the water into wine at the prompting of His mother.

As we ponder these mysteries in the life of Jesus going into this new year, I share with you a reflection I heard last week at the wedding of Sarah Singh-Goins, our Pastoral Assistant for Adult Evangelization. The Deacon preached on the Gospel of the Wedding at Cana and reflected that Jesus takes the water of our lives, the struggles and the trials, and turns them into wine. As such, they become a source of joy.

Today we will leave for Italy and you will all be with me as I pray with the saints at the different shrines, but in a most particular way, at the tomb of our patron, St. Anthony. We will see you again upon my return on January 25.

In His Most Sacred Heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Jack D. Shrum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Jack D. Shrum

**Pastor**