



1st Sunday in Ordinary Time



Date: Sunday, January 12, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 29:1–4, 9–10 | **Response:** Psalm 29:11b

Second Reading: Titus 2:11–14, 3:4–7

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 3:16

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:15–16, 21–22

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. The words of Isaiah ring out across the centuries like a clarion call, cutting through the noise of history with a singular purpose: to remind us that we are not abandoned, that the God who spoke light into being and summoned the stars by name has never stopped calling his people home. This is not the voice of a distant deity, indifferent to the plight of his children, but of a Father who bends low, who gathers his lambs in his arms, who leads us with a shepherd's heart.

Today, we stand at the banks of the Jordan, shoulder to shoulder with those who came seeking renewal, those weary of a world that seemed to have lost its way. We watch as Jesus himself steps forward, not because he needs cleansing, but because we do. He walks into the water not for his own sake, but for ours. And in that moment, the heavens are torn open, the Spirit descends, and a voice speaks the words that change everything: You are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased.

That voice is not mere poetry. It is not sentimentality. It is the very heart of the Gospel. It is the moment in which God reveals, definitively and without reservation, that his plan for the world is not destruction, not condemnation, but love. Radical, relentless, redeeming love. Love that does not wait for us to be worthy but enters the water with us, walks with us, suffers with us, redeems us. Love that speaks into the depths of every human heart and names us as God's own.

The psalmist reminds us that the voice of the Lord is powerful, that it thunders over the waters, that it shakes the very foundations of the earth. And yet, in Jesus Christ, that voice speaks not in fury but in tenderness. It does not crush; it calls. It does not break; it builds. It does not condemn; it commissions. Because the baptism of the Lord is not just about who Jesus is—it is about who we are called to be.

Paul, writing to Titus, reminds us that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to live in righteousness, to renounce godless ways, to be a people zealous for good works. This is not abstract theology; this is the shape of our discipleship. The baptism we share in Christ is not a private affair. It is not a quiet moment of personal devotion, tucked away from the troubles of the world. It is a commissioning, a sending forth, a call to live as people who have seen the heavens opened and who now bear witness to that reality in the way we live, the way we serve, the way we love.

And what does that mean for us, here, now, in this time, in this place? It means we cannot stand idly by while injustice robs the dignity of our brothers and sisters. It means that the waters of baptism are not a refuge from the suffering of the world, but a call to enter into it with Christ's own compassion. It means that when we hear the cries of the poor, the pleas of the oppressed, the voices of those who have been forgotten, we do not turn away. We listen. We act. Because we know who we are. Because we know whose we are.

We do not all have the same gifts. Paul tells us that the Spirit distributes them as he wills. Some of us are called to lead; some are called to serve; some are called to teach; some are called to heal. But all of us, without exception, are called to bear witness. We are called to live in such a way that when people look at us, they do not see just our faces, our strengths, our weaknesses—they see the imprint of Christ.

So, as we leave this place today, I ask you to consider three things. First, when you rise each morning, do you remember who you are? Do you remember that you are not defined by your failures, your fears, or the voices that seek to diminish you, but by the God who has called you beloved? Second, when you look at the world around you, do you see it as Christ does? Do you see those who are

hurting, those who are lost, those who are longing for justice? And finally, what will you do about it? Because faith that remains only in our hearts and does not move our hands, our feet, our voices—is not the faith of Christ.

The heavens have been torn open. The Spirit has descended. The voice of the Father has spoken. And now, my friends, it is time for us to answer.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.