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# Baptism of Zeya Marie Milner

**Date:** Saturday, May 31, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
**Gospel Reading:** Mark 10:13–16
**Preached at:** the Parish of St Ignatius **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

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We gather today to celebrate the baptism of Zeya Marie Milner. As Christians, we belong to the Mystical Church of the Body of Christ, and as the first of the Sacraments of initiation, we are all gathered here to welcome young Zeya Marie into a relationship with Jesus Christ. In some parts of the world we call this occasion a 'Christening' – that is, where she takes on Christ and Christ claims her for himself. It is a special occasion for the parents, and for the godparents, and her wider family. But it is also a wonderful celebration for the Church.

When Zeya Marie was born, Bianca Chanel Milner named her child. In giving her a name, this was the first of many gifts she would receive, and it is a name that, I know, carries deep emotion for the parents.

Let us take a moment to reflect on this beautiful name—Zeya Marie. Zeya, a name of Burmese origin, means victory, success, and grace. In the light of Baptism, these meanings take on new depth. We are reminded today that the ultimate victory is Christ's triumph over sin and death, and that by her baptism, Zeya shares in that victory. This is not success measured by status or achievement, but the quiet success of love, of mercy, of being called and claimed by God. Grace is not something she has to earn—it is something she receives as a gift, poured out by the Holy Spirit.

Her name speaks of hope. That she may be a woman of grace, courageous in the face of hardship, and always grounded in the deeper victory of the Gospel: the victory of love over fear, of light over darkness.

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And then, her second name—Marie—a name borne by the Mother of Jesus. Marie, the French form of Mary, is a name that has echoed through the ages with tenderness, strength, and faith. Mary, the one who said "yes" to God in faith and humility, who stood at the foot of the Cross, and who rejoiced in the Resurrection—this is the legacy that Marie inherits. To be named after Mary is to be entrusted with a spiritual compass: to ponder God's word, to care for others, to trust when the path is unclear, and to carry Christ in one's heart.

And so how fitting it is that Zeya Marie is baptised today, on the Feast of the Visitation. The day Mary, carrying Christ within her, goes with haste to serve Elizabeth. It is a feast of joy, of recognition, and of grace that moves outward. Mary sings her Magnificat—and today, in this home, another kind of Magnificat begins, as grace is poured into the heart of Zeya Marie. Just as the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt with joy, so today the Church rejoices. Heaven bends close to earth, because this child now carries Christ within her too.

As Mary proclaims in the Magnificat:

> "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Today, through Zeya Marie, may we too magnify the Lord and rejoice.

So in her very name—Zeya Marie—and on this very day, we hear a vocation: to live with grace, to walk in the victory of Christ, and to follow the path of Mary in saying "yes" to God.

But after her name, perhaps one of the greatest gifts she can receive is the gift of faith—a gift that is constantly given and received as she grows older and takes on her own role in life, in the Church, and in society. It is by baptism that God gives the grace of the Holy Spirit, a bond that unites Zeya Marie with God, so that we must always remember the words of Jesus that we just heard, in a different translation: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very centre of life in the kingdom."

Today we honour this command as the Church accepts Bianca's request that her child be baptised. The entire Church rejoices with this family and with Zeya Marie, and we willingly embrace her as a Christian and follower of Jesus—the name that is above all other names.

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We began this service by asking what was the name that Bianca had given her daughter. This is because when one is baptised, they enter into a relationship with God not as a slave, but as a friend and child of God—who know each other's names. It is as if we are doing the formal introductions between Zeya Marie and God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and we are all witnesses to that joyous event.

We also all signed Zeya Marie with the sign of the cross, which is the mark of Christians, because Jesus Christ died on the cross.

But we are all gathered here because we too remember our own baptism, and how important the Faith is for each one of us. Even if we practise it differently, we recognise a common baptism and belief in Jesus Christ—and this is what we celebrate this morning.

For those of us unfamiliar with the Sacrament of Baptism, please allow me to just explain briefly what is going to happen in this service. Just now we shall say some prayers, to which the response is 'Lord, hear our prayer'. These prayers are to intercede to God and ask him to bless Zeya Marie and her family. We then ask the Saints to pray for us too, because we believe they can pray for us when we can't. We then exorcise and anoint Zeya with the Oil of Catechumens. This is to remove the stain of Original Sin from her and to prepare her to receive the new life we all believe that we receive in Jesus Christ.

In Baptism we make use of several symbols—these are outward signs representing a deeper reality. The oils have been blessed at the Cathedral during the Chrism Mass before Easter. After we have anointed Zeya we then bless the water which will cleanse her, and we publicly, on Zeya's behalf, renounce sin and Satan. At that point the actual baptism takes place, and we then anoint her again with another oil, the Oil of Chrism. This signifies that Zeya Marie is a full Christian—a priest, a prophet, and a queen in the eyes of God. In this royal, priestly, and prophetic state we then clothe her in white to signify she is a new creation. We will then light the candle that represents the flame of faith the parents and godparents have promised to keep alive for Zeya until she is old enough to tend it herself.

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Let us for a brief moment pause to thank God for our own faith, and ask him for the grace, courage, and perseverance that we might be better examples for Zeya Marie Milner, who at just seven months old already reveals to us the joy of new life and the promise of God's love.

And now, as we prepare to bring Zeya Marie to the font of life,
may the Lord who filled Mary with joy prepare her heart to receive His grace.
May she come to know the quiet victory of Christ,
and grow into the fullness of her name—Zeya, full of grace; Marie, child of Mary.
May she learn to listen like Mary, to love like Jesus,
and to live with courage, humility, and joy.
May Daniella Natasha and Sammy Aaron, her godparents and loving guides,
and Bianca Chanel, her loving mother, be for Zeya Marie a steady presence of faith, hope, and love.

And may all of us here today walk with her, pray for her, and surround her with the light of Christ.

Let us now pray to God together, so that we might share this gift of faith with her as well.

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*[This baptism took place at the family home and the Baptism is registered in the Parish of St Ignatius in the Archdiocese of Lusaka.]*

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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.

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