

LIVE IN YOUR BAPTISM THIS NEW YEAR

On this day, the eighth day, Jesus suffered for sin and was given a name. Many couples struggle with what to name their child. Should we give him or her a family name? Should we give a popular name? Should we give a name that isn't like anything or anyone else? Joseph and Mary didn't struggle to name their child. They were given the name by the angel Gabriel. Not only the name, but His job description as well. "*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home with you! For what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you shall name Him 'Jesus'! For He will save His people from their sins*" (Mt 1:20b-21).

Jesus means "The Lord saves." A long-promised hope fulfilled. The Lord saves! His name is a sign that by His mark and scars He will save us who have been marked with sin and death and scars. At just eight days, we see clearly what Jesus is going to do. He is going to save us. He is going to heal us. He is going to give us peace with God by the shedding of His blood, His death, His victory over death, and His resurrection.

The signs that mark our bodies and the scars we wear always tell a story. The external signs and scars are easy to see. It's not uncommon in our world today to see someone with an artificial arm or leg. These are the signs of war, of accidents, of disease. They are very clear signs of the brokenness of sin in our world and in our lives.

The closer we look, the more signs and scars we see. It doesn't take long to see the signs when you look into the eyes of someone who struggles with dementia or Alzheimer's. Confidence replaced with confusion, gentleness replaced with anger. It can often also be very clear if you're looking into the eyes of someone who smiles and says, "I'm fine. Really. I'm okay," to see the scars and struggles she's trying to hide.

The signs we can see also leave scars we can't see. We can't see them, but we can name them. Alzheimer's. Divorce. Mental illness. Addictions. Every holiday season we see an increase of mental illness and suicide. We hope that time with family and friends would be joyful, but many times the reunions bring up unforgiven events or guilt because of those we've hurt or who've hurt us. We try to cover the scars and put on a happy face, but the reality of our scars is too much.

These scars are the very reasons Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. He was marked and shed His blood for you. It is by His marks we are healed. Isaiah writes, "*Surely, He has taken on Himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered Him to be wounded, struck down by God and afflicted. However, He was pierced for our rebellious acts. He was bruised for our wrongdoings*" (Is. 53:4-5a). Jesus was marked and scarred by nails and spear as He completed what was started on the eighth day.

On Good Friday, "*The chastisement that brought us peace was on Him, and through His wounds we have been healed*" (Is. 53:5b). The scarred, marred Son of God was laid lifeless in a borrowed tomb. His work was complete. By His wounds, by His shed blood, first at His circumcision and completed on the cross, we are forgiven. Everything that should scar us for eternity is gone, forgiven, and forgotten by the scarred Lamb of God named Jesus.

For the first day of the week, the third day after Jesus' crucifixion, is also the first day of a new creation. When God completed His first creation, He rested on the seventh day. When God the Son completed His work of redemption, His body rested in the tomb on the seventh day. But the next day, then, was a new eighth day. On that eighth day, Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, rose victorious over sin and death! In His victory is your forgiveness, peace, and hope. On that eighth day, the day of resurrection, you see His victory over every sin that marks and scars you. Because of His resurrection, your bodies that are marked with death and disease or accident will be restored and renewed in the resurrection of all flesh. Alzheimer's and dementia, sin, sorrow, and sadness will be no more. Death will be no more. Mental illness will not exist.

Today is the first day of 2024, a new year. It's a time when many look for new hope. They try to put the failures and scars of last year behind them. Resolutions to eat less and exercise more. Instead of new resolutions, trying to make yourself better, ***live in your Baptism!***

In your Baptism, you're joined to both of Jesus' eighth days, to His circumcision and then to His resurrection. The firstborn from the dead, Jesus, gives His blood-bought victory to you. When the water is washed across your head, you have God's eternal, saving sign watermarked upon you. "The Lord saves" is now the Holy Trinity's promise to you. You are given faith to believe that the shedding of Jesus' blood has paid for all your sins. Your identity is now child of God, heir of God, and fellow heirs with Christ Jesus (Rom 8:17). Paul assures us that Jesus' eighth days are also your eighth days. "*Do you not know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might begin to live a new life. If we have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, then we shall be planted together with Him also in the likeness of His resurrection*" (Rom 6:3-5).

Living in your Baptism is far more powerful than any resolution you can make. By the power and promise of God, you are covered in the white robes of Christ's righteousness. You are eternally marked as a forgiven and redeemed child of God. You are promised that whatever scars and demons you are dealing with, they are not more powerful than the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, who has put His name upon you and forgiven you by the shedding of His blood. Happy New Year!!!!