

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations... (Peace of drawing close to you)

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, you who are rock redeemer and Renewer of us all. Amen.

Good MORNING! Peace be with you in this New Year!
How is it with your soul? I PRAY it is well, as is mine.

So a quick check-in... Last week we remembered our Baptismal covenant and re-affirmed our current new beginning and continued commitment to walk in the light with Jesus as people who belong to God. How many times have you been reminded of your new beginning this week: In the shower... washing hands... splashing water in your face?

It is so important that Baptism not be an empty ritual or gesture that happened "once upon a time." We remember that the water is a sign of the Holy Spirit that renews, refreshes, and offers a "clean start." Trust me that our funeral rite of passage remembers the baptismal claim of Belonging; you are a child of God.

Today, as mentioned during the scripture introduction, the two passages were selected for their complimentary nature of listening and responding to the Word of God. Similar to last week's pattern, we are given a sense of the setting and then the action. It's so very much like a story or movie script...here's the way things ARE, and Action!

The gospel tells us that John was in the wilderness inviting people to be 'baptized' as a sign of changing hearts & lives. Then all the people went out and were baptized. Baptism here was in the context of Jewish ritual practice. This immersion in water was for ritual purification as a way to be restored to "cleanness" to enter the temple (*mikvah*) and (*tvilah*) for converting to Judaism.

Notice that John told them I'm not the One, there's another to come to baptize with the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus came. And the heavens opened with the HS and a voice spoke with the gift of Assurance. And from there, Jesus begins his mission and ministry.

Let's pray.... (on screen)

Response to the Word

God calls us this day:

**by touching our minds with wisdom and truth,
by healing our hearts with love and joy,
by blessing our bodies with vitality and strength,
by reviving our souls with fullness of grace.**

With every fiber of your being, offer your reply:

"Here I am, for you called me.

May it be so...so be it. Amen.