**< COVER >** May the Peace of Christ Be with you. Welcome to a series of brief conversations regarding Promises that were made during Baptism that we will repeat and renew in Confirmation

**< BORN AGAIN >** Did you ever hear about being “born-again?” Did you ever wonder what that was all about? As Catholics, we believe that we have been born again…. And that is because we have been baptized.

You already know that Baptism involves water. When you were baptized, most of you got a little water poured over your head. **< JESUS BAPTISM >** But, that was not the case when Jesus got baptized in the river by his cousin John. He got “dunked” into the water.

Maybe, once you were the victim of a dunk tank. **< DUNK TANK >** Or maybe you’ve been to the pool or the beach and been involved with others in a little rough-housing. Like when you might have tried to jump on the other person and hold them under the water just for a second or so. Has this ever happened to you? Was there ever a time when it happened and you were held underwater for a second… or two… or four… or eight seconds too long and you had a moment of panic where you might be drowned?

**< EMERGE FROM WATER >** Remember, when you came up out of the water and gasped in some fresh air into your lung. You just grabbed life from the clutches of death. You got new life. It’s almost like being born again. That is what is going on with the water! Baptism moves into a new life with Christ after the symbolic dunking of your old life.

So, let’s talk about the old life for a few seconds. **< LION KING >** If you remember watching The Lion King, this is an example of Old Life and New Life. Simba leaves his past behind, but in the end, Accepts the richness and fullness of a New Life, as The Lion King. Baptism recognizes new life in Christ… But the old life is filled with all the stuff that will trip you up from being happy. Here’s the list: Sin, Evil, and Satan.

**< LION KING WITH >** We make bad choices, there are not great influences all around us, and it is easy to be tricked or trapped into choosing bad influences. We make bad choices – SIN - there are not great influences all around us - - EVIL,- and it is easy to be tricked or trapped - SATAN / DEVIL- into choosing bad influences. Here’s the list again: Sin, Evil, and Satan.

**< NEW CREATION >** Let’s be clear: You have been baptized into a new life with Christ. You are being invited into being a disciple. Look at the work disciple and then consider discipline. Discipline can seem like a punishment often but it is really about self-control. With Baptism and a New Life in Christ, **<DARE>** we are taking control of the choices we make, of what we allow to influence us, and avoid be tricked or trapped into anything that reflects negatively on our relationship with God. When we make our profession of faith at Confirmation and repeat our Baptismal vows in our own voices, we are asked to take upon ourselves the responsibility of rejecting Satan, his works and empty promises. Those elements will still surround us in our new life… but we are choosing the discipline of avoiding sin and evil to be a disciple of the Lord.

**<DISCUSSION>** That’s it for this presentation, but don’t stop. Have a conversation about what has been discussed as well as about your young person’s baptism. Until, our next presenation, may we all place our conversations and our preparation FOR THE Sacrament of Confirmation + in the name. Now, hit pause and leave this last side up on your screen! (PAUSE)

Questions for Discussion:

2. When I was growing up, there was a television preacher who was on the television every morning. The organ music would swell to start the show, he would give his biggest, toothiest smile, open his arms in a wide open embrace of everything around him and he would speak in his fullest, most responding voice:

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad it.

And you believed it as soon as you heard it. You believed it because you know he believed it. He believed it on the very best of days and be believed it on the worst, most challenging, awful day. It was a recitation from the book of Psalms 118. This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad it.

What God has made… That’s an interesting statement. Think about it… What do you recognize as the stuff that God made? Well, pretty much everything! And, you might suggest something that God didn’t make that we human folks did make… like a sandwich…. But if you track back all the ingredients - peanuts, butter which comes from cows, raspberries, grains and oats which make bread…. You can still see God’s work in a sandwich. Maybe that should be my new lunch prayer.

This is the sandwich the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad it.

You’ve heard of god and creation before. It’s the first thing we find in the Bible. In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light. God created the waters and the sky, the earth and the sea, vegetation, plants and fruit. Then the soon and moon, day and night. Then God filled the waters and sky with all sorts of living creatures. Giant sea monsters (check it out - - it is in the bible) and winged birds. Then God filled the land with tame animals, crawling things (yuck, I hate those!) and every kind of wild animal.

Finally, God gets around to us… Making us in God’s “own image and likeness, male and female” we were created. And God surveys everything that has been created and states that all is “very good.”

Everything, even you and me, on the very best of days and even on the worst, most challenging, awful days – it is all “very good.”

This world just can not be by chance… someone, something, somehow has designed it all to work together. The universe started with a ‘big bang” but what caused that? There seems to be universal truths and laws –like gravity, but how and why? That’s all the big stuff, but help explain the intricate stuff like DNA. Finally, deep, deep, DEEP down… there is something inside of us that still leads us to God.

Blaise Pascal, a mathematician, once suggested “What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace?” This suggests a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing.  It can only be filled by God. Saint Augustine describes it all this way, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You.”

When we make our profession of faith at Confirmation and repeat our Baptismal vows in our own voices, we are invited to acknowledge that there is a God who created everything, including us, and that creation is very good. If you can accept that then you might be able to smile each morning and proclaim: This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad it.

3. Do you believe in Jesus? It easy to imagine that is an easily answered question… But do you believe more in the Christmas version of Jesus or the Easter version of Jesus

Many folks are like Ricky Bobby in the movie, Talladega Nights. When it comes to Jesus, they "like the baby version best." Sure, that makes sense. Angels, Shepherds, Holy and clean images of Mary and Joseph and a little squishy baby - - that is God – but in little squishy baby form.

And in our baptism vows, were are asked about this: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. Who was born of the Virgin Mary…? So there it is… The Christmas version.

But the question does not stop there. “who suffered, died, and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of his Father?” The Story of Jesus and our belief in Christ do not just end with Christmas. All the parables, stories with which Jesus taught, all the miracles, and all the life with Jesus and his followers all impact our faith. The death – actually the torturous crucifixion - - all are a part of the story of our faith. But, wait, there is still more. Jesus rose from the dead and continues to serve as a bridge between our reality and heaven through the Eucharist and the sacraments.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold of all this. You will recognize the first part of the prophecy as some variation of it is often repeated during Christmas: “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests.” But the power of this movement goes well beyond the little squishy baby Jesus. The prophecy continues: “They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, upon David’s throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

We keep history by stating the years as within the Common Era (CE) and Before Common Era. (BCE) These terms replaced Anno Domini (AD) which translates from a longer phrase that meant “in the year of the Lord.” and Before Christ. (BC) The person of Christ is central to all of our world history as recorded by the Julian or Gregorian calendars.

The baptismal question of Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. Who was born of the Virgin Mary suffered, died, and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of his Father? When you answer about belief in Jesus, have you also made the answer to that question central to all of your own history?

4. You’ve seen and heard enough television and radio commercial to understand that there are many potential side-effects to a medication. This part of the commercial is referred to as “the disclaimer.” Stuff that you take may be of considerable help to one part of your life but the side-effects of that very same help might complicate another part of your life. And in these commercials, these side effects are often written in very tiny print and / or read really fast and/or are voiced-over happy images of those who are benefiting from the drug’s desired effect.

For instance, there is an antidepressant that is a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor that goes by the brand name Prozac. It is often used to treat depression. All that might be very helpful. But here come the possible side-effects: nausea, upset stomach, constipation, headaches, anxiety, sleep problems (insomnia), drowsiness, dizziness, nervousness, heart palpitations, loss of appetite or increase in appetite, (which might impact (weight changes,) cold symptoms (like a stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat), dry mouth, decreased sex drive, impotence, or difficulty having an sexual orgasm. And, if you are pregnant, it might cause heart defects or serious lung problems for your newborn.

Did you notice that it took longer to outline the possible side effects than it did to actually identify the side effects? Whew! But, the makers of drugs like this need to identify the possible side-effects for you so that you know what some of the possible outcomes might be if you use their product.

Our next question in our baptismal vows is not so much a disclaimer as it is a claim or a declaration. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

It all starts with the Holy Spirit - The third person of our one God. Jesus promised to send an advocate to be with his disciples following his life, death, resurrection and then ascension into heaven. The power of the Lord and the Creator continue to flow through us through the Holy Spirit. Your continued participation in CORE classes and conversations with your Confirmation sponsors will speak more to you about the gifts, promises and differences that the Spirit can make in your life.

The rest of the question speaks to the positive outcomes (side-effects) of Life within the Spirit for the disciples and the generations who followed after them. Believers gathered together in a Spirit-filled one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The Spirit encouraged and embolden the heroic lives of those we consider among our communion of saints. Jesus sent to the apostles the ability to acknowledge God’s mercy is still present and therefore the forgiveness of sins is real and attainable. Finally, through Christ’s sacrifice and Spirit guided enthusiasm and confidence that this life does not end in meaninglessness but in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Those spiritual side-effects of faith might be considered more worthwhile than the potential of nausea, upset stomach, constipation, headaches and the rest.

5. This is our faith.

At Confirmation, we will make our profession of faith at Confirmation and repeat our Baptismal vows in our own voices.

The bishop will respond to all of our affirmations, our “I do’s” with this statement:

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is our faith. So what?

That’s a really rude question… but really… So what?

A profession is just words. Worse, as you prepare for Confirmation, a significant majority of you have yet to actually say these words. Your parents and grandparents professed them on your behalf when you were at baby at your own baptism, but since then… So what?

At Confirmation, you will be invited respond to these questions standing on your own. You will be invited to stand and respond to them with your own voice, professing your own beliefs.

A former Archbishop of Baltimore, Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, when speaking to young people, would often remind them that “You’ve got to stand for something, otherwise you’ll fall for anything.” When it comes to Evil, God the Creator, Jesus, the Spirit and our church, for what do you stand?

In these time of fake news and our search for what is real and authentic, don’t you want to be able to answer, for yourself and for others, the “so what?” or what it is that you believe?

Before we enter into our CORE classes for Confirmation preparation in December and January, this might be some of the stuff that we might consider. Preparation for Confirmation is an opportunity for you to consider for what you believe and for what you might take a stand.

There have been many others before you who have already done the same. Many of our Church’s Saints have lived out heroic lives based upon their faith. While we often treat their life stories with great respect, we also must remember that not unlike us, there were no saints who were perfect.

In anticipation of your CORE classes, we are asking you to try and determine a confirmation name. (See additional information) When you have done so, please be able to identify the name as well and their “so what,” and identity how that saint was proud to profess the faith of our Church in Christ Jesus our Lord.