

Homily — Courage International Truth and Love Conferenceⁱ

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*St. Paul Catholic Church
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a joy to be with you! I am grateful for your invitation to be with you and to celebrate this Eucharist. Courage is an important ministry in the Church and I am grateful for all the work you are doing to help people to learn about the beautiful meaning of the human person in God's plan for creation.

So, it is very appropriate that today we are celebrating the feast of Our Lord's Baptism.

Because this feast is a revelation of God's plan. This feast shows us the great dignity — and the transcendent destiny — that we all have as children of God.

We just heard that wonderful scene in our Gospel. We heard how the Spirit came down upon Jesus like a dove as he is coming out the waters. We heard how the heavens opened and we heard God's voice speaking over the waters.

And we heard those beautiful words of God our Heavenly Father. He said: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

Of course, as we know, these words are addressed to Jesus. But they are also addressed to each one of us. God is speaking these words about you and about me.

Because, my dear brothers and sisters, what happened in the Gospel with Jesus — these same things happened to us when we were baptized. When we were baptized, God's love was poured down on us through his Holy Spirit! On the day when we were baptized, God our Father called us his beloved children. He said to you and he said to me — *“With you I am well pleased.”*

We are God's beloved sons and daughter! We are God's children now! We are pleasing to Almighty God! This is the marvelous meaning of this Feast. And this is the marvelous meaning of our lives.

And my brothers and sisters, I think this is so important for us. Because this beautiful truth about the meaning of our lives has been lost in our society.

All the issues that we are dealing with. These questions about sexuality and gender and love and marriage and all the troubles and injustices we see in our society — they are all rooted in this bigger challenge that we face.

The problem is: We don't know who we are any more.

The truth is that our society is being “de-Christianized.” The elites in our society are driving God out of our daily lives and trying to silence his voice in the human heart. But as the reality of God is fading away, the reality of the human person is disappearing, too. We are becoming strangers to our own selves.

Without God, we lose the answers to the most basic questions of life — Who am I? What am I here for? What is my body for? How should live?

So, it is no wonder that we have so many people in our churches and in our society who are confused about these things. Confused about how to live. Confused about the meaning of their bodies, the meaning of love.

But we have the answer. The answer is right here in this Gospel that we heard this evening. This is it: “You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter.” God is speaking that to every person.

This is the truth that people want to know. They want to know that their life has a meaning, a purpose. They want to know God's love and his tenderness. They want to know the truth about their lives.

And we see that beautiful truth today, as I said, in this feast. We are all made to be God's children, we are all made in God's image! Body and soul, male and female. Our bodies are made to be temples of the Holy Spirit and to be glorified in Christ. We are made to be holy, to be saints.

This is the truth about the human person. This is who we are! Children of God.

Jesus comes as a child of Mary so that we can become children of God. Jesus comes to be our brother — to walk with us, to lift us up. He comes to share in our humanity — so that we can share in his divinity.

This is the mystery of our lives in God's plan. This is the truth about the human person.

And my brothers and sisters, in our society right now — so many people are looking for this truth, for this love.

I was thinking about that as I was listening to that first reading. We heard that great commission that God gives to Isaiah — *to be a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring prisoners out of darkness.*

And I was thinking — that this must be *our* mission. The mission of the Church, the mission of Courage, the mission of every ministry in the Church.

The truth about the human person is the great light that our nation needs. This truth is the light that can open the eyes of people and set them free from their prisons and their darkness.

So, my brothers and sisters, we need to proclaim this truth about the human person to our society. We need to help every man and every woman to know the love of God, to know the beautiful plan that God has for their lives.

We need to help them to hear the voice of God saying to each one of them: “You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter. In you I am well-pleased!”

So it is a great and essential mission that you have. My prayers will be with you tonight and tomorrow as you are studying and reflecting on these issues. And please do not forget to pray for me and my ministry to the family of God in Los Angeles.

And let us ask Our Blessed Mother Mary to help us to bring the truth and love of Jesus Christ to the men and women of our world today.

ⁱ Readings (The Baptism of the Lord): Isa. 42:1–4, 6–7; Matt. 3:13–17.