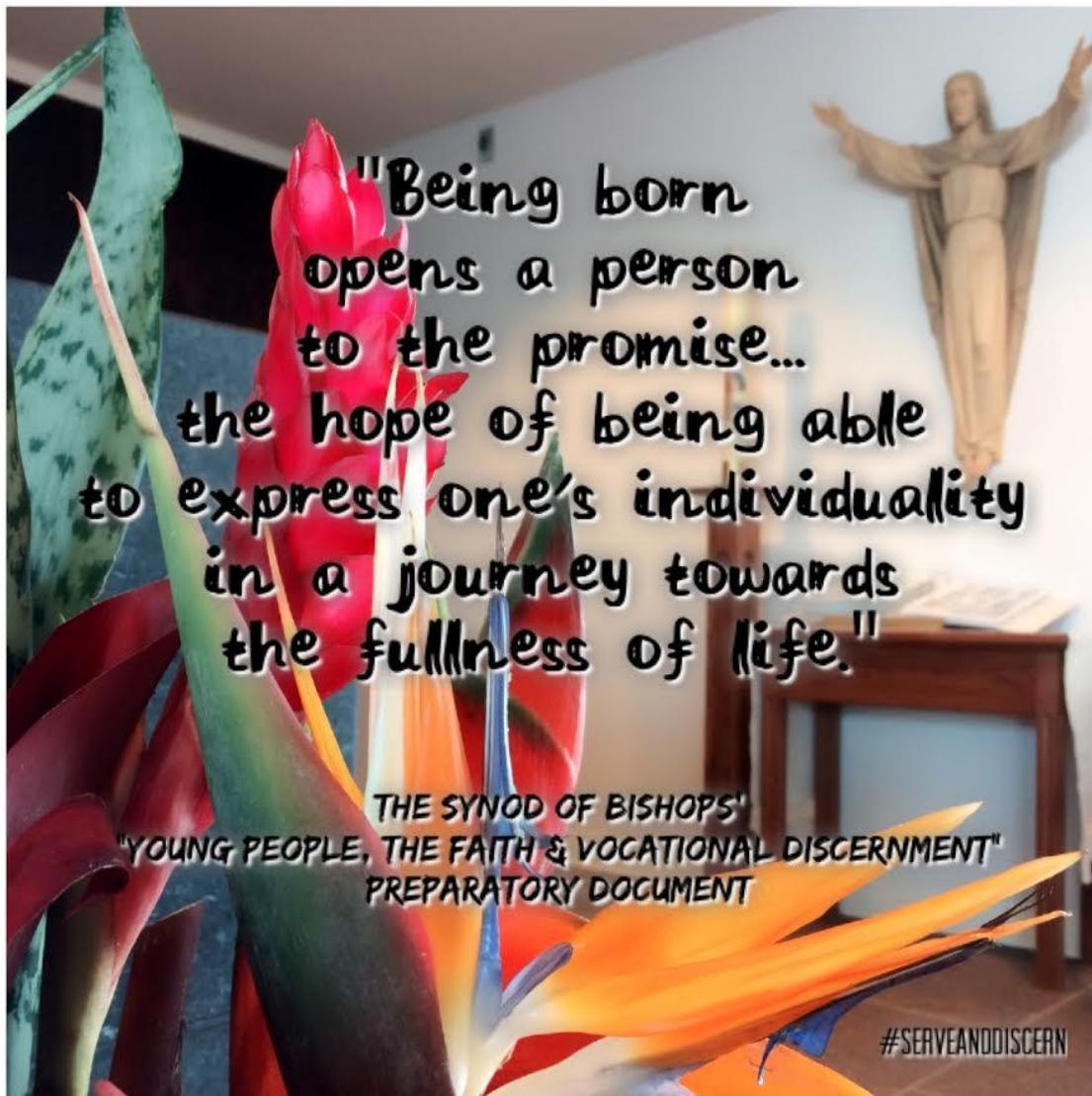


-Week 3-

The Gift of Baptism: Receiving God's Grace



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The Gift of Baptism: Receiving God's Grace

Last week, we explored “Calling: Awakening to the Mystery with Brave Response,” which invited each of us to name and reflect on the different kinds of callings we have experienced in our life’s journey. We were also invited to prayerfully reflect on the element of ‘mystery’ that accompany calling. Continuing into this third week of our Benedictine Volunteers 20-weeks Vocational Discernment Series inspired by the Synod of Bishops’ “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” Preparatory Document, we explore “The Gift of Baptism: Receiving God’s Grace.” How does baptism relate to calling? In what ways does the sacramental gift of baptism support our discernment journey?

The *Preparatory Document* cites the wisdom of the Eastern Church, which describes baptism as a kind of birth or, awakening, “when someone becomes a child of God through grace.” By the very nature of our baptism, each of us has received a spiritual calling from God as sons and daughters. Let us recall how Jesus was baptized. Matthew illustrates an image of heaven opening, the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus like a dove, and a voice saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17). God recognizes Jesus as his loving son and offers words of support and encouragement. Jesus hears these affirming words and accepts in them a special calling, for it is shortly after his baptism that Jesus embarks on his journey of public ministry.

Similarly, in our own receiving of the sacrament of baptism, God intimately extends relational love to us as his daughters and sons. Baptism naturally graces us with God's paternal love and care. This love is like a parent's loves for a child. There are no prerequisites or conditions. Simply by being born and being who we are, we are loved and we are all called by God. In this call of baptism, we are also challenged— like Jesus who is challenged towards public ministry— to identify how the uniqueness of our calling can extend out into the world by sharing God's love with others. Baptism gifts us the grace, comfort, and confidence in knowing that God's love is always with us and that this love can inspire our hearts to go out into the world in a variety of ways.

Questions for Reflection:

- Recall the memories and events around the day of your baptism. Perhaps it is useful to do so by having a conversation with family and friends or, revisiting albums and pictures. What images and feelings stand out to you from the day?
- If few or no memories of your baptism arise for you, perhaps it may be helpful to read and pray over Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3: 13-17 and also, Luke 3: 21-22 and Mark 1: 9-11. Image yourself in these narratives. What images stand out for you? How do you imagine Jesus feels? How do you imagine God feels?
- When you prayerfully ponder God's paternal love gifted to you through baptism, what qualities does this love inspire in you?