

Renewal of Baptismal Vows (1Pt 3,21)

Dear Bishop Peter,

Dear fathers,

Dear Sisters,

Here are some ideas that may be of help in preparing your homily for this Sunday, 29 July. The topic is the Mystery of Baptism. Since this is a very important theme you may want to use it for the next two or three Sundays.

As we are celebrating the Feast of Saint Volodymyr, it is a wonderful idea to have the congregation renew their baptismal vows (Synod of Bishops UGCC 2006). Before the Creed we have the prayer and the short dialogue, as suggested by Fr. Andrij. If it is possible each person can hold a candle while renewing their vows (tapers are OK because they do not drip and it is easy to distribute them to everyone). Through renewing our promise to God we express our gratitude for *“the great gift of our baptism”* (Blessed John Paul II). We are also grateful to our ancestors who passed on to us the gift of Christianity. We thank God for the Light of Christ through the teaching of the Gospel that shone on the mountains of Kyiv, and on all of us today wherever we find ourselves carrying this gift in our hearts.

Through the Mystery of Baptism we become a part of the body of Christ - the Church. As the reborn children of God, we have the responsibility of witnessing our faith before the world. We praise God for the grace of our baptism, and we pray that this great gift may become the foundation of our way of life in our families, our children, our communities, our organizations and in every facet of our daily lives.

This year 2012, is a special gift of God as it is a year (one of the three years) of preparation for the Jubilee of 1025 of Baptism of Russ – Ukraine which we will celebrate in 2013.

Having become more confirmed in our commitment to Christ we will probably appreciate even more our many wonderful church traditions. For example, when celebrate the feast of Transfiguration on August the 19th it is a good time to encourage families to bring fruits of the earth to church for blessing in beautifully decorated baskets with our embroidery in a similar manner as we do it at Easter. Such a tradition can reawaken our gratitude to God for who we are, and for the many gifts that we are endowed with so generously.

May God bless all of us on this special Sunday, in order that we and the people entrusted to us experience the presence of our Saviour, and may all of us be filled with the joy of being his body and already participating in the heavenly family.

Fr Ihor Holovko