

**Homily – Friday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time  
St. James Catholic School – September 6, 2024**

Dear parents, students, teachers, staff, and members of St. James School community; today, we stand on the threshold of something new and exciting. Our school is undergoing physical renovation, a new building rising as a sign of growth and renewal. We are reminded of the deeper spiritual renovation that God desires in each of our lives. This new construction is more than just bricks and mortar; it is a visible symbol of the grace of baptism, which invites us to reject sin and embrace a radical friendship with God.

Pope Francis frequently suggests that we celebrate the anniversary of our Baptism. Do you know the day of your baptism? *“If you do not remember, when you return home, ask what it is, so as not to forget it any more, because it is a new birthday, because with your Baptism you were born into the life of grace. Let us thank the Lord for Baptism.”*

Baptism is our entry into this friendship with God, a moment where we say “no” to sin and “yes” to a life in Christ. Friendship with God is not something to take lightly. It requires a determined determination – a steadfast commitment to remain faithful, to persevere, and to allow God’s love to transform us. This is not always easy. It takes courage to face our fears, doubts, and the resistance we might feel within ourselves. Yet, it is through this struggle that our relationship with God deepens and flourishes.

St. Paul, in his own journey, faced harassment and suspicion, yet he knew that his task was not to promote himself,

but to be a humble servant of the mysteries of God. He understood that the message of salvation belongs to God alone. We, like Paul, are called to be stewards of God's grace, not boasting in our abilities, but trusting in God's wisdom and love that never fail.

In the same way that this school community is being renewed, we too are called to allow the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts. We cannot cling to old habits or ways that do not give us life. Just as new wine requires new wineskins, the new life we have in Christ calls us to live in a way that reflects the joy, hope, and love of the Gospel.

As we move forward, let us embrace this newness with open hearts, trusting that God is guiding us. Let us be joyful disciples, alive with the Holy Spirit, ready to face the challenges of our time with courage and love. May the new building we see rising around us be a constant reminder of the inner transformation that God desires for each of us – a transformation that begins with our baptism and continues every day as we choose to walk in friendship with God.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us commit ourselves to this journey, confident that God, who has begun this good work in us, will bring it to completion.