



Dear St. John's,

January 20, 2026

As people committed to following in the footsteps of Jesus, we find our footing in the baptismal covenant. Our ministries stem from the promises we make. You will often hear us ask the questions, *"Will you seek Christ in all persons? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?"* As Christians, our collective voice echoes, *"I will, with God's help."* And then we get to work practicing what we preach.

Over the past several weeks, we have been drawn to the other questions raised in our baptismal covenant. *"Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? Do you renounce all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?"* Although we always respond with the words, *"I renounce them,"* lately we have been wrestling with what these questions mean for us in this moment as we seek to claim our baptismal identities more fully.

Evil exists in our world. There are spiritual forces of wickedness fighting to turn us against one another, manipulating us into seeing and treating each other as enemies, and corrupting us into believing that those who are different from us possess less God-given dignity. These forces also give rise to paralyzing cycles of anger, exhaustion, frustration, and fear.

How our immigrant neighbors are being treated by the empire is sinful. Families are being torn apart, people are afraid to leave their homes, and children are returning from school to find their parents missing. Those who stand against this sin are being met with violence. We cannot turn a blind eye to the injustices that are destroying the lives of God's beloved. And so, we as clergy and leaders of this parish renounce all actions that cause harm to the people we are called to love. Our marginalized neighbors are fighting for their lives. We are called to bear witness alongside them in word and deed.

And like many of you, we share in the feelings of anger, frustration, and exhaustion. However, our baptismal promises will not allow us to remain captive to the chaos of these emotions. To still those waves of anger and exhaustion, we must always remember that we are people of prayer. In times such as this, the fidelity of our prayer is especially important. Our common prayer cultivates stability in difficult times. It draws us into the presence of God, strengthens our commitment to walk together in the love of Christ, and creates space to discern how we might live out our baptismal covenant.

Bishop Craig Loya of the Diocese of Michigan recently shared:

"The forces of evil we promise to resist in our baptismal covenant want us to meet anger with anger, they want us to meet hatred with hatred, they want us to meet scorn with scorn."

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The forces of evil are always fed by mimetic anger and hatred. Those forces are out there tonight, as ever, daring us to become its food. And, beloved, we aren't going to do that. We are going to make like our ancient ancestors and turn the world upside down by mobilizing for love. We are going to disrupt with Jesus' hope. We are going agitate with Jesus' love. Not because we are weak or we have given up. And for God's sake not out of some naive wish that that everything will be just fine when it is so obviously not. We are going to choose to turn the world upside down with love because we know the cross of Jesus Christ settles forever that love is the most powerful force for healing in the universe."

We believe that love is the most powerful force for healing in the universe. So, we invite you to renounce evil, to be steadfast in prayer, and to speak out (in word and deed) against those who seek to deny the God-given dignity of the most vulnerable. Then we ask you to turn from anger, hate, and exhaustion and step back into the waters of your baptism with love and reckless abandon.

We remain faithfully yours,

Amanda + Joe +