

Baptism Homily for Alistair Francis Antonino Holden

Today is a special day. It is not often during Ordinary Time that we get to welcome a child into the household of God. Yet, that is what we will do today as we baptize Alistair Francis Antonino Holden.

It is also not often that I focus our attention exclusively on the psalm appointed for the day. Yet, that is what I want to do for the sake of Alistair, his parents, and all of us.

As I was pondering this psalm, it occurred to me that many of us go through life distracted by our work, worries, responsibilities, and trials. Some endure a daily diet of despair, hopelessness, anger, fear, loneliness, and the absence of dignity. We are so distracted that we have little, if any, time to focus on God. Our struggles are so plentiful that we end up taking for granted the wonders of God. We expect plentiful food to be available. We assume our car will still be in the parking lot at the end of the day. We expect the house will provide safety from the elements and comfort. We expect the sun to rise and set, and the sky, and the moon and stars to be there even if we do not look up.

Often, it is only when the norms of life and the necessities of our existence are disrupted that we give a thought to them. And when they are disrupted, we find ourselves asking, "God, why me?" as if these disruptions affect no one but ourselves.

Rather than letting disruption jar us awake and bring us into engagement with God, we can cultivate a relationship that is there for us in good and tough times. Psalm 146 shows us the way. It reminds us to praise the Lord from the depths of our souls. Additionally, it warns us not to put hope into human beings whose lives are limited like ours and unlike the eternal God. God also keeps promises to us forever. God brings food, healing, justice, freedom, mercy, righteousness, and sustains those on the fringes and frustrates the wicked. The Lord shall reign forever throughout all generations.

When we offer our thanks and praise to God, we realize too that we are not on our own. We remind ourselves of our utter dependence on the God who created us, redeemed us, and sustains us every day. We remind ourselves that God walks with us all the days of our lives. We can find respite in sharing our burdens and responsibilities with the Lord, knowing that it is not all up to us. When we give thanks and praise, we claim our place in a partnership with God that lasts from before our birth through our death and into a larger life beyond death.

Alistair, today, as you are baptized, you will experience something that none of the rest of us will. Like Jesus, you will hear God say, "You are my beloved, with you I am well pleased." Carry those words in your heart all the days of your life. Treasure them and treasure the relationship that you have been invited into with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Praise and thank God each day for all that God has given you. Do not let the world distract you from the best and most important relationship anyone can have. God's love is blessing, nurturing, sustaining, and without judgment. It is the greatest gift of all.

Alistair, you are blessed and a blessing. Never forget it. Mom, Dad, sisters, grandparents, and all here present, it is your job to never let him forget it.