1 November 2026 Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church
The Feast of All Saints Vienna, VA
Baptism of Mary Rose Hansen

Jesu Juva

"I'm a Child of Paradise!"
Text: 1 John 3:1-3; Revelation 7:2-17; Matthew 5:1-12

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

See what kind of love the Father has given to Mary Rose, that she should be called a child of God; and so she is. The child of Logan and Melody according to the flesh; a child of God by her new birth by water and the Spirit.

She is now numbered among the 12,000 from each tribe of Israel, for she has been marked, ***sealed***, with the sign of the cross ***upon her forehead***. A member of the church on earth, the Church Militant, exactly numbered, all known to our heavenly Father.

But she is <u>also</u> now numbered among that ***great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages . . . clothed in white robes***. For here in this water, she has been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. She is a member of the Church Triumphant, though not there yet. For there is but one Church, spanning time and space. Transcending time and space. In heaven, triumphant and at rest; on earth, militant; still pilgrims on the way.

But as one Church, we here join our voices with theirs, one great chorus of praise to the *Lamb who was slain who has begun His reign*. *Holy, holy, holy* we sing with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. And Mary Rose has joined us in that today. Her mouth may not be able to form or speak the words, but her spirit can. And does.

OK - enough about Mary!

See what kind of love the Father has given YOU, that YOU should be called children of God; and so YOU are. Everything I said about Mary is true for you as well, by virtue of <u>*your*</u> baptism. For as John goes on to say in his Epistle, ***Beloved, we are God's children <u>now</u>, and what we will be has <u>not yet</u> appeared*** . . . It will, one day, appear. For that vision of heaven, all the saints gathered around the throne and the Lamb, clothed in white robes . . . that's <u>*you*</u>! You're in there. That's not just the

saints that lived *before* John that he is seeing. Jesus is pulling aside the curtain and giving John a glimpse of eternity. John is seeing *outside* time and space. And so he sees the saints of the past and of the future; from Adam and Eve, to his brother and brother apostles, you and I and Mary, and even those not yet born . . . and I would add to that **Mary's brother, Philip** - there. Safe. Free from sin. Risen from death. In peace and joy.

Because, as ***one of the elders*** goes on to tell John, ***he who sits on the throne will* shelter *them with his presence***. Their peace and joy, their no more hunger or thirst or scorching heat, their comfort is because of this *sheltering*. And the word John uses there is the word for *tent* or *tabernacle*. Now it's not translated into the English that way because we don't have a verb form of that word in English! I *tented* you, or I *will tent* you. We don't talk like that. But - and some of you probably know where I'm going with this! - that's the word John uses **to speak of the incarnation** - of Jesus becoming flesh. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt* - or tented, or tabernacled, or *sheltered - among us* (John 1:14).

So when the Son of God came to save us, He tented in our flesh and blood. He was the new tabernacle. But not in a superficial way only. He took on our flesh and blood and made it His own, *forever*. And in that flesh and blood He not only died on the cross for us and rose from the dead for us and ascended into heaven for us, He is sheltering us forever. His flesh and blood is *our* tent now, and *our* dwelling place forever. That's why Paul says of baptism (and as we sang in the baptismal hymn) that we are not just baptized BY Christ, but INTO Christ Jesus. Baptism puts us *into* the tent of Jesus' body and blood.

That's why baptism is such a incredible gift! It is our comfort, our refuge, our shelter in the midst of an evil and wicked world. As we make our way through the wilderness of this world to the Promised Land of heaven, we remember: *I am baptized* into *Christ; I'm a child of paradise* (LSB #594).

Beloved, we are God's children* now** - this is true for us *now* . . . but, John goes on to say, ***what we will be has* not yet *appeared. That is, you are a child of God *now*. True. You are in the great multitude *now*. True. But what do things look like *now*? What do we *see now*? Well, *not that*, right?! There is no heaven on earth. Still we live in an evil and wicked world. We live in the Church Militant. We live in the midst of strife and sin and death. That's what we *see* - in the world *and in ourselves, too!* - **and it causes us to struggle**. Struggle to believe it. Struggle to live as who we are in Christ.

And it *is* a struggle, this life. You know it. For how often, instead of waving palm branches, we wave a fist. Instead of praise, we criticize and demean. We rebel

against our parents. How often are we are restless for what we do not have instead of resting in what we do. Doubting instead of rejoicing in the words and promises of God. Fearing the world more than we trust in God. How often do we feed out lust instead of our souls. Hungering and thirsting for what is passing away instead of what is eternal. I know you shouldn't . . . and yet, I do. You know you shouldn't . . . All those things. Your sinful nature dragging you down . . .

But at such times when the struggle is real and great, remember who you are: *a child of God!* You may not look it or feel it, but that's why we don't rely on what we see or feel! You may think you do not deserve such an exalted status - and that's true! You don't! It's a gift. Which is why we don't rely on what we see or feel or deserve - we rely on the words and promises of God. And today, these words: ***See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are***. So we ARE.

Because what God call a thing, that's what it is. Not so for us. Our words don't do that. **Only His**. Our words wishful thinking at best; sinful, deceiving, misleading, and destructive at worst. Some might call a man a woman, or a woman a man, but that doesn't make it so. Some might call a baby just a clump of cells, but that doesn't make her so. Some might say *any* two people can marry, or even that we don't need marriage, that it is obsolete, but that doesn't make it so. You might look at yourself in the mirror and think: *No way you're a Christian! Look at you!* But Jesus said: I baptize you. You are my child. And so you ARE. Not because you've done it, but because He has. Because God's word does what it says. His words are creative words; creat*ing* words. God said, Let there be light, and there was light. Jesus tells the dead to rise, and they do. He rebukes demons and they flee. And in the same way He says you are my child, and you ARE. He says *I forgive you*, and He DOES. He says *this is My Body and this is My Blood*, and it IS.

And so you are sheltered from the sin and evil and death in the world *and in you*, because like Mary today, *you* are baptized into Christ.

So in the midst of the struggle of this world and life - yes, your struggle against sin, and yes, your struggle against doubt, *this reality is true for you, too,* - at the same time! - what we heard Jesus say today . . . You are ***poor in spirit***. You ***mourn***. You are ***meek***. You ***hunger and thirst for righteousness***. You are ***merciful***. You are ***pure in heart***. You are ***peacemakers***. And you are ***persecuted*** for all this, by a sinful world and a raging devil. And you are ***blessed***. Because you are ***called sons of God*** and ***yours in the kingdom of heaven***.

Beloved, we are God's children now, [even though] ***what we will be has not yet appeared;*** *though* now we live this mixed up life! ***But we know that when he***

appears - when Jesus returns, John goes on to say - *<u>then</u>* ***we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is***. *Then* it will all come to pass. *Then* we will see what we do not yet see. *Then* we will see as John saw, that great multitude in heaven, in peace and joy and rest. *Then* we will look at one another and not see the sin, but Christ. That we do not see or feel that now doesn't negate the promise. The promise we, with John, have a glimpse of *now*, in the Word and by faith, even in the midst of this *not yet* world, in the midst of the struggle. But that day is coming . . . and coming soon, I hope!

Mary received that promise today, was given a new life, and a promised eternal inheritance. She *looks* the same, but she isn't. For today we saw God's love and grace in action in the baptism of Mary Rose, as Jesus took a sinful human being, created her anew, forgave her all her sins, and said, *You are my child*. And she *<u>is</u>*. The sign of the cross was put upon her, and so marked her, sealed her. And now her parents are going to teach her about that - about what happened today, and that sign of the cross. And every time she makes it - with her little hands, her teenage hands, or her old wrinkled and aged hands - every time she makes the sign of the cross she will say, *I am baptized! That's who I* <u>am</u>*!* Sheltered by Christ and His cross, raised to life in His resurrection, and in that great multitude in His ascension. I'm a child of paradise!

Yes, yes you are, Mary Rose. And so are all of you. *All saints*.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.