

JANUARY 12, 2026 FATHER HAIG CHAHINIAN

My dear friends, it is a joy to be with you all today celebrating the sacred mysteries on the feast of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys.

And as we begin our reflection today, I would like to bring to mind an intricate but profound aspect of the gospel we heard from St. Mark today.

Of course, we know that this was at the beginning of Christ's ministry, where he had made his way to the Jordan River and was baptized by St. John the Baptist. And we heard at the beginning of the gospel that St. John, at that time, had just been arrested and imprisoned because of the amount of attention that he was receiving, and the fact that he was telling people to prepare for the Messiah who was coming just after him.

And, interestingly enough, we see a very human element in this journey. Because the evangelist writes that Christ, on his way to Galilee, was proclaiming the good news. That's an important detail that I would like to call to mind for a moment.

Geographically speaking, from the Jordan River to Galilee, at that time, over 2,000 years ago, was probably in the range of about 150 km of distance of travel, which probably would've required about four or five days on foot. Now, you can imagine the emotions that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was experiencing, and the thoughts that were going through his mind on that journey.

We think just a few moments ago Christ had experienced his baptism. He experienced hearing his heavenly Father say, "This is my Son with whom I am well pleased." On his way to Galilee, probably stopping over

in towns to rest in the evenings, the murmur, the talk about John the Baptist being arrested—that news was probably spreading.

We can relate on journeys as we journey right now at the beginning of this new year. We too think back, and we have these wonderful memories of good things that we've experienced very recently. And, at the same time, contrasted by certain ambiguity or difficulties—the challenges that each and every single one of us, including myself, are going through in our daily lives, in the deepest places of our hearts, or maybe something we're sharing with those closest to us.

However, despite these similar emotions that Christ was likely experiencing himself, he committed. He committed to the apostolate that he was to begin. Despite knowing what had happened to John, he knew that he needed to make his journey and begin to reciprocate that love and that call with those around him. And that's when he called the Apostles. And that's when he shared his love. And that's when, telling them that, "I will make you fishermen of men," they responded to that call.

Just as the saint we're celebrating today, in the 17th century, interestingly enough, making her journey. When St. Marguerite made her journey from France to what is today Canada, it was not that same trip that we experience today—10, 12 hours in a plane. It was probably, on average, 7–10 weeks. Not knowing what was going to happen when she arrived in Canada, and the mission she was in front of. But she knew that she was committed to the mission of Christ. And despite that, despite the poverty, she lived a life of active service, establishing the first school for young ladies, for young girls in Canada, in what is today Montreal. Living a life dedicated to our Lord. Founding the congregation of Notre Dame. And bringing hope, education, and dignity, and the strengthening

of families. Just as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ did on that journey.

So, my dear friends, to conclude for today, I would like to leave us all with the following thought—each and every single one of us, no matter what stage we are in in our lives, are on a path. And on this path, through moments like this, celebrating the sacred mysteries together, discerning and reflecting on our faith, we experience a variety of emotions. Because each and every single one of us are going through multiple different challenges on a daily basis. But each and every single one of us can also speak to the joys that life has given us through the graces of God.

So, let us also be prepared to not only respond to the call of Christ but also to call on Him. Because a true love is reciprocal. A true relationship is filled with ambiguity. But it is based on trust. And a trust that can only, only be broken, in this case, by us, not by God. Let us take this relationship, this thought, with us as we go about this new year.

Amen.