

January 11, 2026—Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord

This is the last day of the Christmas season; we leave the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding it behind and jump 30 years to His baptism by His cousin, John the Baptist in the River Jordan. There are five Sundays after today that are part of the season of Ordinary Time, then we begin the season of Lent. The Scripture readings of the next 5 Sundays of Ordinary Time narrate the beginning of Jesus' public life mostly from the perspective of the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus' own baptism foreshadows Christian baptism which we receive in the Catholic Church. It was instituted by Jesus 40 days after Easter, just before He ascended into the glory of heaven. There is great meaning behind Jesus' baptism, which Pope St. John Paul made the first of the Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary. It is from the Gospel of St. John that we get the words of John the Baptist when he first saw Jesus on the Jordan. These are the words that the priest repeats in every Holy Mass when He holds up the consecrated Host before Holy Communion: **“Behold, the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.”** John expressed his belief in Jesus as the Savior on the day of His baptism, and we express our belief in Jesus truly present in the Blessed Sacrament making John the Baptist's words our own.

Matthew's Gospel today told us that John the Baptist first objected to baptizing Jesus. He had been preparing the way for the Messiah, and when he saw Jesus, he knew that He was the Messiah and humbly said: **“I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me.”**

Jesus didn't need to repent of sins and receive sanctifying grace in His soul, like we do. He wanted to be baptized by John to align Himself with what John was doing—preparing the way for Him. It is another example of the humility of Jesus.

Christian Baptism is Trinitarian. We were baptized, **“In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”**. A few years ago, there was an article in the Catholic Press that spoke about a young priest who was watching a video of his own baptism as a baby. He was shocked to hear that the deacon who was administering the baptism didn't use the correct words as the water was poured. He immediately informed his bishop who told him to stop his priestly ministry. He had to be baptized, with the correct words, receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and be ordained a deacon and a priest once again before he could resume celebrating the sacraments. Baptism is the first of the sacraments and transforms

and seals the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can be saved and also receive the other sacraments.

At the baptism of Jesus, we see the three Persons of the Holy Trinity present on the River Jordan in different ways. Of course, the Son of God is present in His human nature to be baptized by John. Then the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove. This becomes one of the main images we use in art to picture the Holy Spirit. God the Father is present at the baptism of Jesus by His voice, His words, which were **“This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.”**

At our baptism, we had Original Sin washed away and were given the gift of Sanctifying grace, which are tremendous things, but we were also made children of God. After your baptism, our Heavenly Father could look at you and say, “This is my beloved son or beloved daughter with whom I am well pleased.” Baptism is primarily the work of God; our part is to respond to that gift of grace.

We speak about self-esteem and self-worth a lot these days. We often base that upon whether I am successful or a failure or whether people like me or don’t like me, whether I can accomplish this thing or not, whether I am productive or not. If we place our self-worth on things like that, which most people do, then we are in danger of becoming very discouraged with life. Sometimes we are successful, sometimes not. Baptism speaks the truth about your self-worth—you are a child of God! You have a great value, an infinite value in the sight of God that cannot be taken away by the changeable conditions of life.

This also means that we need to treat others with the dignity they deserve because they have by been created in the image and likeness of God, and for many, made a child of God through baptism. Are we lifting people up with our words and deeds or putting them down? Are we striving to make those around us feel that they have great value or do we mainly focus on ourselves and our needs? God loves each one of us; He calls us to love like He does and show people that they have great value in our sight. That is certainly foundational to the pro-life message we must bring to the world.

Baptism is not just a nice ceremony, but the beginning of a whole new way of life that is meant to end in heaven.