

2026_01_11 Homily
The Baptism of the Lord

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/011126.cfm>

This Sunday, as we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, we can reflect on the nature of our Baptism. One of the deepest and more important questions that we can ask ourselves during life is "Who am I?" When we take this question seriously, It is a great sign that we are ready to grow. Unfortunately, for many of us, "Who am I" can be a pressing question. The search for the self, the quest for our identity, even though deep and great, can be responded with fake answers that come from groups, thoughts, cults, gangs, and ideologies of all kinds. For instance, movies, soap operas and a lot of our contemporary songs tell us that we are mostly sexual beings. Our body is not sacred, and we can do with it whatever we want. Also the Media tells us that we are mostly makers and spenders of money. In a materialistic society, we are told that we are either successful or losers according to the amount of money and material possessions that we possess.

So, where can we find a true answer to the pressing question of "Who am I"? The church has traditionally responded, "You are baptized, the beloved ones of God." And these few words describe our truest and deepest identity: We are The baptized, The beloved of Jesus Christ, The Ones in whom our God is well pleased. At baptism we all are given a specific name, and we are also given the name "Christian." Both names are given gifts. So, the church makes a radically different statement about who we are and how we get to be who we are. Identity is given rather than earned. We learned who we are through the day-to-day love and care that our families show us.

Who am I? Baptism says that we are prophetic, priestly and royal people. The Christian message is not that we should try hard to "act like somebody." The Christian message is stronger and more challenging: "We are somebody." We are the beloved ones of God; We are adopted children; We are priests, prophets, kings and queens. The words of God, "This is my beloved one in whom I am well pleased," are an extraordinary revelation about each one of us: We are loved by God. God clearly sees that each one of us has a unique greatness with the potential to please Him.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that we are God's chosen servants, with whom God is very pleased. In a world in which hate, racism, discrimination, violence, and injustice are everywhere, our God is well pleased, only when we ring forth the best in us. God created each one of us with a unique greatness, so we all have the potential to love what Jesus loves and to act as Jesus acts. Our greatness allows us to be a visible presence of God in the world as Jesus did. Jesus loved the greatness of the created world and use it to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to give a drink to the thirsty, to

reach out to those on the margins of society, to hang out with sinners, and to restore the dignity of the forgotten and broken of the world.

Jesus Christ got involved in God's Saving Plan by acting with loving care and kindness, as to bring God's justice through concrete actions of mercy, brotherly and unconditional love and salvation. So, when we imitate Jesus, we respond to our baptismal call, and we are proclaiming to the world the deepest true sense of our identity: We are God's Beloved Children. In a world broken by suffering and divisions, the Lord calls us to be instruments of his forgiveness, healing love, justice, and reconciliation. Our true identity is to live and speak and love as Jesus did. By imitating Jesus, we become fully human. We are part of God's creation, and Jesus used the goodness of the created world, to teach us how to love and care for one another. Each one of us is great and called to greatness. We are baptized. We are God's presence in the world. The Baptism of the Lord helps us to remember who we are and whose we are. How blessed we are.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday 11th January 2026
The Baptism of the Lord

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, Jesus went about doing good. We, who have received the same Spirit at our baptism, pray that we may spend our lives doing good.

1. May we respond to Pope Leo's prayer intention for January that we will pray with the Word of God in order that we become a more missionary Church.
We pray to the Lord.
2. May the grace of baptism in each one of us protect us, enable us to act with justice, and fill our hearts with the merciful love of Jesus.
We pray to the Lord.
3. May diplomacy prevail for the people of Venezuela in political crisis, and the people of Greenland facing anxious times.
We pray to the Lord.
4. May the people of the Holy Land, as we have marked the 2nd anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel, and the subsequent war in Gaza, be delivered from present suffering and fear, so that peace and justice is given a chance.
We pray to the Lord.

5. May we, in the United States of America, rise above racial tensions, and seek to respect the faith, culture, and traditions of all who live here, free from bigotry and violence.

We pray to the Lord.

6. May those in our world who are struggling with the effects of climate change and natural disasters, receive the help and assurances they need.

We pray to the Lord.

7. May all baptized into Christ and who have died, receive the blessing of eternal life.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Heavenly Father, anoint us in your Holy Spirit so that we can walk in the light of Christ, and live his commandment of love for one another, who lives and reigns forever and ever.