

20260111. Cycle A. The Baptism of the Lord. Called out of the comfort zone

Today's readings remind us of who God created us to be and how we are called to live in the world. They also show us how Jesus calls each of us to serve in meaningful and sometimes surprising ways.

The baptism of Jesus is closely connected to our own baptism. It reminds us that God is pleased with us and that God's Spirit is with us. Just as the Spirit rested on Jesus, it rests on us as well. We are not forgotten or overlooked—we are loved and chosen.

Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his public ministry. His work focused on compassion, healing, truth, and peace, especially for people who were poor, rejected, or imprisoned. His message challenged powerful religious leaders, and it was not always welcomed. Yet this radical ministry has lasted through the ages and continues to give us hope. It teaches us to keep going through struggles and to celebrate joy while loving the people we meet along the way.

I was especially drawn to the moment between John the Baptist and Jesus at the Jordan River. When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John was shocked. He knew his role was to prepare the way for Jesus, not to lead him. I imagine John felt overwhelmed or unworthy of such a task.

If we put ourselves in John's place, many of us might say, "That's not my job," or "I'm not qualified." I know that is often my first reaction when I feel uncomfortable or when things do not go as planned. It is an easy way to step back and let someone else take responsibility.

But this moment was not the end of John's mission. Instead, it was an invitation to something new. Jesus tells John that this is what God desires. In doing so, Jesus affirms John's goodness and his ability to serve God. John is not pushed aside—he is invited to continue his mission alongside Christ.

Many of you are aware that we offered the OCIA program here at Holy Trinity for the first time in a long while last year. I have led this program before, but this experience was especially meaningful. After the participants received the sacraments, we gathered to share reflections. Each person spoke beautifully about their journey, but one reflection stood out. With her permission, I would like to share Bethany's words with you today.

"April 19, 2025. I was baptized.

In the beginning, the outside fire was burning. We came into the church; it was dark. Then, we lit candles for the light of Christ. The whole congregation lit a candle, which was so beautiful. We had readings of God's word.

At one point, before I was baptized, everyone sang a song to the Saints to pray for us. During this time, I started to feel comfort, warmth, and peace. The young ladies and the lady at the piano sang and played the music beautifully; you could feel their love for Christ in their voices.

After the song, I knew it: it was time for the baptism. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." I felt a fire in me when the water wet my head. I felt happy, overjoyed, and all my sadness was gone... I felt pure and cleansed. I was so happy I could not keep from smiling and feeling giddy and tickled.

I am so thankful for getting to feel the Holy Spirit; my heart is so full; I am spiritually full. I am now an adoptive child of the Father.

When my sins were washed away, I could only think of God's grace and the love he has for all of us. Then I saw Heather being baptized, which made my heart even fuller of joy. I also felt the love and joy from the touch on my shoulder from my godmother (madrina) and my godfather's (padrino's) joy.

I saw the pureness and happiness of Karmen, my daughter, as she watched me get baptized; her little eyes were lit up. She has been my example to follow Christ. I can feel her love, Tito's love. My mother's love.

Then we were confirmed. My brothers and sisters were confirmed together, which got my heart and soul going even more. That fire in my heart was growing. Then, getting the sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ. I felt full.

Afterwards, everyone was so welcoming and loving. Everyone was happy and filled with joy for us on that beautiful day."

Bethany and her family are active members of our parish. She continues to grow in faith and service, and she serves as a hospitality minister and as a catechist for Children's faith formation.

Today we celebrate Jesus' baptism and the start of his public ministry. This is also a time to reflect on our own baptism and to renew our commitment to live out that call each day. As we work for justice in our own lives, may our actions keep Christ's message of truth alive in our hearts and in the hearts of everyone we meet.

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, God the Father revealed him as His Son. Through Jesus' baptism, we are invited to share in that relationship and to follow his example of service to the Church, our communities, and everyone we meet.

Today's Gospel invites us to rediscover our Christian dignity, to work for truth and justice, especially for those most in need. I pray that through the love of God that you share with the poor, they may find a way to recognize their own dignity.

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

Acts 10:34-38

Matthew 3:13-17