

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Baptism of the Lord
January 12, 2025

A New Life in Christ

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In a small church filled with light streaming through stained glass windows, a family gathers around the baptismal font. A priest pours water over the head of a tiny infant while praying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The baby stirs but remains peaceful, as though soothed by the sacred moment. Family and friends smile, some with tears in their eyes, marveling at the miracle of this child being brought into God's divine family. It's a moment of joy, a moment of transformation, a moment where heaven meets earth.

This scene, so familiar to us, echoes the profound and extraordinary moment of Jesus's baptism in the Jordan River. In Luke's Gospel, we see a strikingly different setting: the wilderness, a rugged prophet, and the River Jordan, its waters flowing with ancient significance. John the Baptist, a voice crying out in the desert, baptizes Jesus, not to cleanse him of sin—Jesus is sinless—but to reveal his divine mission. As Jesus emerges from the water, the heavens open, the Spirit descends like a dove, and a voice proclaims, "You are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased." This is no ordinary baptism; it is the revelation of the Trinity and the beginning of Jesus's public ministry.

The Greek word for baptism means "to submerge" or "immerse." It symbolizes death and rebirth. In baptism, we die to sin and are reborn in Christ, receiving the gift of *zoe*—divine, immortal life—over mere *bios*, our earthly existence. This sacrament is not just a symbolic act but a profound transformation. Through the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our souls, and we are united with the Father, Son, and Spirit in a divine relationship. We are no longer merely children of flesh but children of God, members of Christ's body.

When Jesus entered the waters of the Jordan, he transformed baptism from a sign into a sacrament. The water became a means of grace, a cleansing and renewal not just of the body but of the soul. The Holy Spirit, who descended upon Jesus, now descends upon each baptized Christian, bringing the fire of divine love. This fire purifies, burning away sin and igniting within us a passion to live as Christ lived—with love, mercy, and zeal for God's kingdom.

As Saint John Paul II beautifully said: "Those who receive this sacrament are baptized in the Spirit of God, to become members of Christ and with him and with our brothers and sisters, to form one body. . . .An immense gift! We should celebrate the day of our Baptism as we do our birthday! But how many of the baptized are fully aware of what they have received? We must give a new impetus to catechesis, to rediscover this gift which also means taking on a great responsibility."

This Sunday, let us reflect on the immense gift of baptism and renew our commitment to live as God's beloved children, aflame with the Spirit's love.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy