

## *Baptism of the Lord*

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Lord's Baptism. On this day God reveals his Son to the world. On this day the Son of God sanctifies the waters of our Baptism. The powerful, life-giving Spirit of God comes upon Jesus, and the heavenly voice identifies him as God's beloved Son. Jesus' baptism is the beginning of his ministry. Empowered by God's Spirit, he begins to proclaim the gospel—God's own good news—that the kingdom of God is making its appearance.

This feast provides us with an occasion to reflect on our own baptism, that marvelous sacrament by which we entered into the life of the risen Christ. It was our baptism that enabled us to receive all of the other sacraments. It was our baptism that freed us from Original Sin—from the power of Sin that rules over those who do not submit to God's rule.

Before we could speak, before we could choose for ourselves, our parents and godparents did for us what we could not yet do for ourselves—they brought us to the cleansing waters of baptism. Immediately after we were immersed in the waters of baptism, the priest anointed the crown of our head with sacred oil called chrism and said: *God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, and given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was*

*anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.*

Notice what this prayer says: Just as Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King at his baptism, so were we. The outpouring of God's Holy Spirit designated Jesus as the *Priest* who would offer the sacrifice of his own life for our sins, as the *Prophet* who would bring the good news of the kingdom of God, and as the *King* who would rule over God's people. At our baptism we became a *priestly people* who offer an acceptable sacrifice to God every time we attend Mass. We became a *prophetic people* who are charged to bring the good news of the gospel to the world. We became a *royal people* who live in the kingdom of God. All of us were who are baptized as are priests, prophets, and kings.

This is not the way that we normally think of ourselves. We think of others as priests, prophets, and kings, but not ourselves. But whether we realize it or not, our baptism made us priests, prophets, and kings in service the gospel. So what does it mean to be a Catholic today? What does it mean to practice our faith? The answer is as simple as it is challenging: *to be a Catholic is to live our baptismal vocation of being priests, prophets, and kings.* To be a Catholic is to offer the sacrifice of our lives every day, to bring the word of God to those who have not heard it, to live as member of God's kingdom. If we do this, we will live our baptismal promises, which I now invite you to renew.