

## *Baptism of the Lord*

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Lord's Baptism. In doing so, we bring our celebration of Christmas to a close. Like the Feast of the Epiphany, this feast celebrates the manifestation of Jesus to the nations. Jesus the Son of God enters the waters of the Jordan to be baptized. The heavens are opened; the Spirit descends upon him; and heavenly voice proclaims, "You are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased."

Jesus' baptism, however, is different from our baptism. We enter the waters of baptism as sinners; Jesus enters the waters of baptism as God's beloved Son. We enter the waters of baptism to be cleansed from sin; Jesus enters the waters of baptism to purify and sanctify the waters of our baptism. And so, Jesus' Baptism sanctifies and makes our baptism holy.

In today's second reading, St. Paul describes our Baptism as a "bath of rebirth," for it was through baptism that we entered into the new life Christ made possible through his death and resurrection. Before our baptism we belonged to the old order of sin and death; we belonged to the old Adam who disobeyed God. After our baptism, we belong to the new order of grace and life; we belong to the new Adam who is Jesus Christ

Because most of us were baptized when we were infants, we have no memory of our baptism; and so we rarely think of Baptism as the decisive moment

in our lives when we entered into the new life of God's grace. But even if we have no memory of our baptism, it was our entrance into God's life, the gateway to the Christian life.

In his letter to the Romans St. Paul writes "we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." And in his letter to the Colossians he reminds us "we were buried with Christ in baptism, in which we were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised Christ from the dead."

Through baptism we entered into the life of the risen Christ. This is why St. Paul proclaims we are a new creation in Christ. This is why he calls our baptism "the bath of our rebirth." Through baptism we belong to Christ. Through baptism we share in the life of Christ. Through baptism we have been given the seed of resurrection life.

Baptism is the gateway to all of the other sacraments; it is our entry into the church, which is the body of Christ. It frees us from the power of sin and death, and it enables us to live a life of grace empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

As we celebrate this Feast of the Lord's Baptism I invite you to renew your baptismal promises. As you do so, recommit yourself to the extraordinary new life made possible in and through Jesus Christ. If your faith makes you ready to renew your baptismal promises, please rise and renew your baptismal promises by responding "do."