

The Baptism of the Lord – 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Jubilee Year 2025 also includes a special local endeavor in our diocese. Beginning in Lent, Bishop Fabre will launch a five-year plan to encourage our growth in faith. The first year will focus on proclaiming the faith and will be known as the **Year of Evangelization**. Subsequent years will build upon this: 2026 – Understanding the Faith (teaching and learning), 2027 – Celebrating the Faith (the Sacraments), 2028 – Serving the Faith (our call to serve others), and 2029 – Sharing the Faith (our ongoing mission).

Since you cannot give what you do not have, we necessarily begin with evangelization. By making the effort to better understand both what we believe and why, we will be better equipped to explain our faith to others who want to learn more about the source of our hope (*see 1 Peter 3:15*). Stay tuned for more as we prepare to launch the Year of Evangelization.

About today: Each year, Holy Mother Church celebrates the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after Epiphany. We commemorate Jesus' baptism by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River, marking the beginning of His public ministry. We are invited to reflect on the significance of our own baptism and our call as God's beloved children.

When Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father proclaimed, *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"* (*St. Matthew 3:17*). Though sinless, Jesus' humility in receiving baptism forever made holy the waters of our own baptism. Though Baptism, we are changed forever: original sin is washed away, and we are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ.

Baptism is a beginning – not an end. This sacrament calls us to holy life where we reject sin, live in the truth, and share the Gospel. This feast challenges us to renew our baptismal promises and live as Christ's disciples. Here's how:

Reflect on your baptism. Do you know the date you were baptized? If not, find out! Since you were reborn that day, get yourself a little gift or dessert. Make the day special. Take some holy water and renew your baptismal promises.

Resolve to live the mission to which we, as disciples, are called. There is great peace in taking Jesus seriously when He says, *"Go! Make disciples of all the nations"* (*St. Matthew 28:19*). We live our baptism especially by performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. (If you're not sure what those are, do a quick internet search.) Become a fervent witness to the love of Christ in your daily life.

Finally, pray and encourage others. Ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance to resist sin and grow in faith. Then invite others to discover or reconnect with the Church. The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord reminds us of our identity as God's children and our mission to share Christ's light. Let us embrace this call with renewed zeal, bringing hope and grace to all we meet.

Be the light of Christ!
Father Wilson