



January 11, 2026

Christmas Time: the Baptism of the Lord

"Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptized by him." Matthew 3:13

Dear Friends,

From the earliest times, the followers of Jesus were embarrassed by his submission to John's baptism. All four gospels wrestle with this question of why he did. The gospels try to provide reasons. One is that God wills it. Jesus is obedient which pleases God and gives God's voice an opportunity to proclaim Jesus as the beloved Son. I believe that Jesus is baptized for the same reason of his Incarnation. To be in solidarity with humankind. God in Jesus wants to identify and share our existence. Our communion with each other is what pleases God.

Historically Jesus starts out as a follower of John the Baptizer. Eventually the Spirit will lead him in new directions. Rather than the penitential baptisms of John, Jesus will move to a different prophetic sign—fellowship meals. Jesus saw these meals as a sign of the kingdom breaking into our world. At table with Jesus, we experience healing, forgiveness, unity, solidarity, and communion with God and one another. So important was this to Jesus that he celebrates a last meal with his followers. He tells them this is how he wants to be remembered, as bread that nourishes and drink that quenches our deepest thirsts. Then he adds *"do the same in remembrance of me."*

Through Baptism and Eucharist, we are immersed into the saving death and rising of Christ. We are saved together, not as individuals, but as members joined to the Body of Christ. Cardinal Blase Cupich Archbishop of Chicago writes that the ritual for receiving communion has special significance, *"It reminds us that receiving the Eucharist is not a private action but rather a communal one, as the very word 'communion' implies. For that reason, the norm (rule) established by the Holy See for the universal church and approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is for the faithful to process together as an expression of their coming forward as the Body of Christ and to receive Holy Communion standing."*

Processions have been an important part of the liturgy from the time of the early church. Processions remind us that we are a pilgrim people. We make our way together to the fullness of the heavenly banquet that Christ prepares for us. This is why we process into the church; we process to bring forward our gifts; we process to receive communion and process out at the end of mass to bring Christ into the world.

Unfortunately, many Catholics are listening to people and groups who claim to speak for the church but only divide it. They do not know the larger Tradition. This past year we celebrated the one-thousand-seven-hundredth anniversary of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325. This Council forbade kneeling on Sundays and during the Easter Season. In canon 20, the council fathers commented, *"there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day and the days of Pentecost"* but *"it seems good to the Holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing."* Kneeling is not a sign of reverence but penance. Eucharist which celebrates the resurrection is not a moment for penance. Therefore, it is appropriate to stand as we proclaim the resurrection.

Standing to receive communion is a reverent way to receive communion. We are united in Christ by our baptism. In the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity and love, we stand together with the risen Christ. We should never impede with personal devotions the procession of our coming together in Christ. We stand with Christ who stands for us!

Peace,

Fr Ron

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