

## Reflection for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the liturgical bridge that connects the Christmas Season to Ordinary Time. We can see this Feast concluding the Liturgical Christmas Season, that began with the Christmas Eve Vigil Mass. If we only see the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord as ending the Christmas Season, we miss the importance of this Feast and what it can and should be saying to us today in the year 2025. Seeing this Feast as a bridge that connects the Christmas Season to Ordinary Time can help us see the importance of this Feast, and the importance of the Baptism of the Lord. Just as St. John the Baptist, the last of the Prophets was a bridge between the Old and the New Covenant, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the liturgical bridge between the Christmas Season and Ordinary Time. Also, in our Gospel Reading this Sunday we see a movement for the ministry of John the Baptist, preparing for the Messiah, to the ministry of Jesus the Messiah with His Baptism by John the Baptist.

We can see a clear need for a bridge between the Old and the New Covenant and this is the role that St. John the Baptist fulfilled. The world needed to be informed that now was the time to get ready for the Messiah, to repent and reform their lives. This is a message that the world embraced as they waited for Jesus Christ to begin His public ministry. This is also the message that we embraced as we journeyed through the Advent Season, joyfully preparing for the celebration of the Birth of the Savior of the World. It is the message of St. John the Baptist that prepared the hearts of the people to be receptive to the words of Jesus Christ. It is this same message that helps us every year in the Advent Season to prepare our hearts to be receptive to the miracle of the infant born and placed in a manger, this infant being the Savior of the world, the Messiah.

The movement from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant is a natural progression of God the Father's salvific plan for the world. But it is a seismic shift. The Old Covenant's "*an eye for an eye*" is replaced with "*loving your neighbor as yourself*." The New Covenant brings about a fuller understanding of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and a focus on the love and compassion of God. As I write these words, I can just hear a friend of mine Fr. Martin Pina, saying, "*wait, wait, don't you think God has an expectation of how we live our lives. He is a God of justice and judgment.*" To answer Fr. Martin and anyone who might have been thinking along the same lines, yes God does expect us to take up our crosses every day and to follow Him. We can turn to the prayer that Jesus gave us to pray when His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray.

*Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

The *Our Father* is a prayer that we pray together at every celebration of the Mass, and it is a part of every decade of the rosary that is prayed. This prayer reminds us of who our Heavenly Father is, that He gives us everything we have, and we ask Him to forgive us as we forgive others. The prayer of the *Our Father*, reminds us that we have a responsibility as followers of Christ. We are asking our God to be as loving, kind, and forgiving to us as we are to others. Clearly when Jesus shared the *Our Father* with His disciples, He had expectations of them. God's forgiveness is conditional on our contrite heart, on our desire for have a new beginning. It is important to note that God's love is unconditional and is always there for everyone. What a blessing it is that we have the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so that we can experience God's forgiveness.

The Sacraments of our faith, all seven of them, provide us with the grace to embrace and share God's love. Today as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord, we are reminded of the starting point of our journey of faith. It is through our baptisms, be it as infants, or adults we enter a new relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and became members of the Catholic Faith. The Sacrament of Baptism is a bridge for us from the life of old to a new life with the hope of eternal salvation. Just as the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord provides a bridge from the Christmas Season to Ordinary Time, so Baptism provides a bridge to eternal salvation to a life with hope of a world beyond this world, the Heavenly Kingdom.