

Many Members. One body united in Christ.

The Baptism of Our Lord

St. Matthew 3:13-17

11 January, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved sons and daughters of the true Father, God Almighty, born of water and the word and given the new birth of the Holy Spirit,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Those who have been washed in the waters of Holy Baptism are not what they once were. Jesus entered the Jordan River as the spotless Lamb of God and came out anointed with the Holy Spirit and drenched in the sins of the world so that He could suffer God's righteous wrath against them.

You and I were once dead in our sin and our trespasses and could not make ourselves otherwise. We couldn't make ourselves righteous because there was nothing in us except unrighteousness. Every thought, every word, every deed was stained and corrupted by pride and unbelief. We were foolish, unrighteous, unholy, and condemned. We both outright transgressed the holy law of God by our disobedience and we tried to find a way to boast in the righteousness of our works thereby denying God's judgment and our need for the Christ whom He has sent. We could not by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come to Him.

But this is what you once were. No longer. You are a new creation. In Holy Baptism your sin, your death, your unbelief, your pride, your lusts, your laziness, your selfishness, your pettiness all have been drowned under the flood of Jesus' atoning Blood. The unclean spirit that once ruled you was cast out and made way for the Holy Spirit who gives you life and animates you, who creates faith and fills you with new and holy desires that you carry out through His strength. You are a new man, created by God in Christ Jesus, zealous for good works which He has prepared beforehand for you to walk in. You were plunged into the waters of the font a condemned sinner with only eternal punishment in your future and, by the Word of God, were drawn out a dear and beloved child of God, cleansed of the guilt of all your sin, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

This was the way it needed to be because in no other way could we be made other than what we once were - unholy, unrighteous, covered in wickedness. In no other way could we be restored to the God who in love and mercy had created us in His image and likeness. Thus, our only hope of righteousness is that the righteous One

bestow His righteousness upon us. And that is precisely what God has done for you in Holy Baptism. He has given you Himself. He, the Son of God in human flesh offered up to death, is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He does not enable us to do things for ourselves. He does them for us and gives them to us as free gifts. He commands what is dead to be alive and so we are. This is the power of the Word of God which fills the waters of Holy Baptism and makes them life-giving waters, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.

You are not what you once were. You are not as those who, apart from this heavenly washing and the gift of the Holy Spirit, are still slaves to the desires of their sinful flesh, slaves to their perverted reason, and blinded by the devil's lies of happiness. You now belong to the God of all grace and mercy. You have been purchased by the holy, precious Blood and the innocent suffering death of Jesus Christ. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit who conforms you to the image of Him whose Name you bear. You have been given the mind of Christ which is filled with mercy and compassion and patience and love. You are being conformed to the image of Christ. As He is you are called to be and such is your joy because as a child of God, the will of your Father is your joy and you delight to carry out. You know that all things are yours already in Christ. You know that the world has nothing to offer you. You know that all things, even your crosses, are gifts from your Father who loves you.

As children of God your eyes look to your Heavenly Father and your voice calls upon Him confident that He will meet your every need. You delight in what and who God has made you, the vocations in which He has placed you, and the work He has given you in those vocations. These are a delight to you because, like Jesus, your delight is in your Father and His will. You have no need of selfish ambition, pride, fear, or anxiousness. These all belong to what you once were. Instead, you rest secure knowing that all that you need your heavenly Father will provide and that His will is for your eternal salvation. You are no longer one against the world trying to eek out some kind of existence, trying to get ahead of your neighbor before he gets ahead of you. You are a child of God, free and glad to offer your body and all your Father has given you as a living sacrifice to God. You are a member of the body of Christ, bound to your brothers and sisters in Christ by the one Spirit who has brought you into the one faith and filled you with one hope. You gather with them around the one altar to receive the one cup and the one loaf of your one Lord. The family of God has all things in common because we know that all that we have is a gift from God. The needs of the one member are the needs of the whole body. For what is eternal? My brothers and sisters in Christ or the treasures

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of this world? By your Baptism you have been brought out of the slavery and poverty of solitude into the joy and riches of the family of God.

Beloved baptized. You have been born again of the will of God. The things that this sinful world treasures are useless to you and harmful to your salvation. The desires of your sinful flesh are deceptions, enflamed by the devil to lead you back into the death from which you have been delivered. Do not be deceived by them. Drown them again in the promises of your baptism by which you have been made children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Lay claim to the true and eternal treasures which God distributes to you as a gift - forgiveness, peace, hope, His eternal word, the Means of Grace, and this holy family. You are not what you once were. By God's great mercy in Christ, you are a new creation.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.