

HOMILY
BAPTISM OF THE LORD
January 11, 2026

Alfred Nobel amassed his fortune by producing explosives. Among other things he invented dynamite. When his brother died, a newspaper confused him with Alfred and they published a long obituary for Alfred Nobel. The newspaper described him as a man who had made it possible to kill more people more quickly than anyone else who had ever lived. When he read this, he realized that this was not the way he wanted to be remembered. Shortly after this he developed the Nobel Peace Prize, and that is what he is remembered for today. If you were to read your obituary what would it say and would you be happy with it?

Today we celebrate the solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord. We just celebrated Christmas a couple of weeks ago and baby Jesus is now a grown up man and ready to start his public ministry. Tomorrow we go back to Ordinary Time. All of the decorations, the sentiment and the Christmas music will be gone. We go back to Ordinary Time where real life is lived. Jesus was baptized by John, which was a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need a baptism of repentance because he never sinned and had no need for a baptism of repentance. Why did Jesus want to be baptized by John? He came to be like us in all things but sin. He came as one of us to show us how to live.

After Jesus was baptized, a voice of the Father came from heaven saying “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Everyone here who was baptized, on the day of your baptism, God looked at you and said “You are beloved son or daughter, with whom I am well pleased.” Our baptism was not just a moment that washed away original sin; it is the moment that gave you a new identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ. You will always have this identity. You cannot be unbaptized. Your choice is how well you will live out your identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Today as we begin a new year, it is a good idea to look at how you are doing as a disciple of Jesus Christ. One easy way to live out your identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ is to attend Mass

regularly. Worship with other disciples each weekend as a reminder that you are a disciple. Most of us will not have the opportunity to read our obituary in the newspaper before we die, but we can assess how we are doing so far. A good place to start is with the new commandment that Jesus gave us. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love your neighbor as Jesus loved you. Jesus loved you so much that he died for you. Now that is love. He told us that following the new commandment is how people will know that we are his disciples. This means respecting all human life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. This includes respecting the dignity of all human beings. I think we all have biases against certain groups of people. Some of these are conscious and some of them are unconscious biases. I want to challenge you to look at those biases today, make conscious the unconscious biases, and see what you need to do to change.

I think one of the reasons we have all of the divisions in our country today is because our culture encourages us to demonize certain groups of people. Some groups have become scapegoats for everything that is wrong in this country and that needs to stop. Are you treating certain groups of people badly because of their political affiliations or their opinions on certain political issues? You do not have to agree with them but Jesus is still calling you to love them and treat them with dignity and respect. I am an attorney. I understand the importance of the law to keep order in our country. We need to enforce the law and change it when necessary but enforcing the law is never an excuse for treating people badly. We need to treat every human being with dignity and respect.

So today I invite you to write your own obituary. How are you doing as a disciple of Jesus Christ? You became a disciple on the day of your baptism and on that day God looked upon you and said you are my beloved son or daughter, with whom I am well pleased. Is he saying that as he looks upon you today?