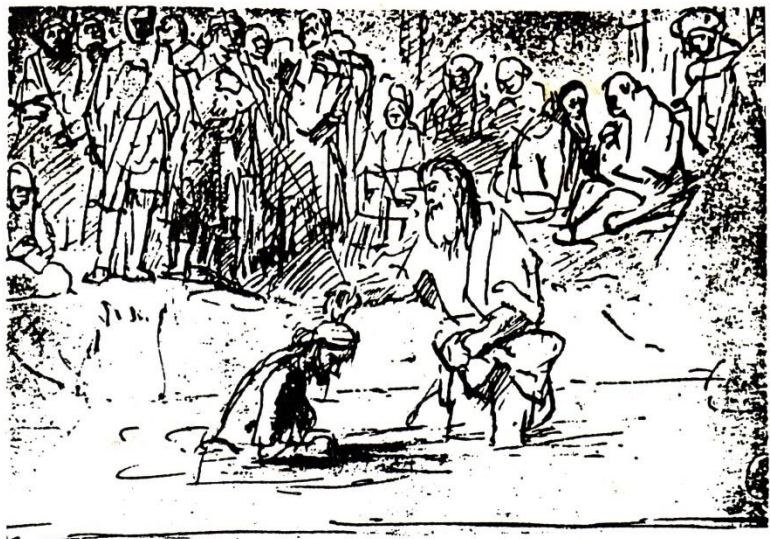*Based on Matthew 3:13-17*
First Sunday after the Epiphany

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

The baptism of Jesus is the launching point of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus fully embodies the people of Israel; he is the true king, descended from David, he is the greatest of prophets because his very life is what all the ancient prophets pointed to, and he is the great high priest whose intercession secures forgiveness of our sins forever.

And in this moment, as his head lowers into the waters of the Jordan, He is the rebirth of Israel into a new covenant,

a new relationship with God. From this moment forward, the people of God will not be limited to a chosen ethnic group descended from the patriarchs but will encompass all of humanity and all who are willing to empty themselves of their own self- interest and fears and who fill themselves with the love of God instead. God's people are all those whose lives are an imitation and reflection of the life of Jesus.

In this moment, a new opportunity is born and an invitation given to all to participate in the abundant life that grows from the love of Jesus. In this moment, our eyes are opened to the possibilities of a fearless love and what it might do when unleashed on the world.

And in our own baptisms, we participate in Jesus' baptism and become grafted onto Him. We too are renewed, given second birth, that we might love boldly and without fear. That we might center our lives on hope, mercy, and the love of God and neighbor.