

As we are nearing the end of the Christmas season, we conclude our reading of the first letter of John. This is a pastoral letter in that John wrote to protect the faithful from innovators who had come along and taken some people away from the true faith.

Today we hear about the important idea of testimony. John testifies that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Unfortunately, some people have been preaching different ideas about the Son.

John, however, reminds the faithful about the importance of believing in the historical Jesus. He uses the phrase "water and blood." Jesus' ministry began with His baptism in the Jordan River (water), and ended with a baptism of blood in Jerusalem. One does not believe in some "pie in the sky" Jesus, but what He said and did while He lived here on earth.

Along with water and blood, John includes the Spirit. The Spirit, too, testifies. How so? The Spirit obviously testifies in the liturgy, particularly in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.

For example, in baptism, all three – water, blood, and the Spirit testify to Jesus Christ. Obviously, in baptism there is water. However, the water has no power to regenerate new life in a little one without the Cross of Christ (blood) or the Holy Spirit. In baptism, all three are needed – Christ's death and Resurrection, water, and the Holy Spirit.

What about the Eucharist? Obviously, we have wine, which becomes the blood of Christ. The Spirit, for His part, changes the wine into the Blood of Christ. However, there is also water. When the gifts are brought up, we have both water and wine.

At the preparation of the gifts, I pour a little drop of water into the wine. This symbolizes the blood and water that came forth from the side of Christ on the Cross. Additionally, the water symbolizes our humanity, and the wine divinity. Thus, it not only symbolizes the Incarnation – the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature, but the fact that one day, we will participate in His divinity.

For us today, we who have been baptized by water and the Spirit testify God sent His son (shed His blood) that we might have eternal life. May we do so with great joy, courage, and charity, that all might come to believe in the name of the Son of God.