

The Baptism of the Lord, Cycle B

Sunday, January 10, 2021

First Reading

Isaiah 55:1-11 (The first reading from Cycle A, Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7, may also be chosen.)
Isaiah calls upon the people to return to the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Isaiah 12:2-3,4-6 (The psalm from Cycle A, Psalm 29:1-4,9-10, may also be chosen.)
A prayer of praise for God's salvation.

Second Reading

1 John 5:1-9 (The second reading from Cycle A, Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38, may also be chosen.)

The Spirit of Truth testifies on behalf of Jesus, God's Son.

Gospel Reading

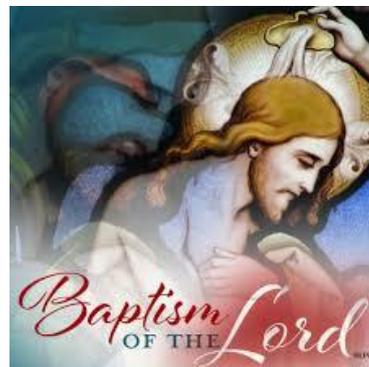
Mark 1:7-11

Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today we celebrate the feast of the **Baptism of the Lord**. In most years, this feast is celebrated on the Sunday after Epiphany. When Epiphany falls on either January 7 or 8, the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the Monday after Epiphany.

In today's Gospel we hear **John the Baptist contrast his baptism of repentance with the baptism that Jesus will inaugurate**. John the Baptist says that *he has baptized with water, but that the one who is to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit*. John's baptism was not yet a Christian baptism; it was a preparation for the Christian Baptism we celebrate today, and through which **sins are forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit is received**. In accepting John's baptism, Jesus, though sinless, united himself with all sinners.



The **baptism of Jesus is reported in each of the three Synoptic Gospels**—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Clearly, **Jesus' baptism was an event of great significance for Jesus and for the early Christian community**.

Mark and Luke report the story from Jesus' perspective; the voice from heaven is addressed to Jesus. In *Matthew's Gospel, the voice from heaven speaks to all who are present*. The **descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism shows that something new is beginning through the baptism and ministry of Jesus**.

The **baptism of Jesus is considered an important manifestation of God in the person of Jesus, another epiphany**. Jesus' baptism inaugurates his mission.

Mark's Gospel moves quickly from the report of Jesus' baptism to Jesus' temptations in the desert to his ministry in Galilee after John's arrest. The **end of the ministry of John the Baptist is the beginning of Jesus' ministry**. In an analogous way, our Baptism inaugurates our mission as Christians. Surprisingly, on this the last day of the Christmas season the Gospel does not tell a story from Jesus' childhood. Instead, the Gospel reveals Jesus' relationship to God: **The Son of Mary and Joseph is also God's own Son**.

We believe that through Baptism we are also made children of God.

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Family Connection

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:7-11

Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

In the story of Jesus' baptism, we hear the report of a significant moment in Jesus' life. By **accepting baptism from John, the Baptist, Jesus shows himself to accept solidarity with sinners.** In the voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we know that God received this offering from Jesus and found it pleasing. In the passages that follow in Mark's Gospel, we learn that Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of his public ministry.



Although many of us may have already taken down our Christmas decorations, liturgically speaking, the Christmas season hasn't ended yet; today is the last day.

Holidays like Christmas are highlights of our year, moments of great grace. This grace renews us and prepares us for our return to the season of Ordinary Time, to the continuing work of discipleship.

Gather as a family and discuss your feelings about the ending of the Christmas season.

How does it feel to take down the Christmas decorations?

Many of us experience a let-down after the excitement of Christmas; others may feel relieved that life is returning to normal.

Liturgically, we end the Christmas season today by reflecting on the importance of Jesus' baptism.

Read together today's Gospel, Mark 1:7-11.

Jesus' baptism prepared him for his public ministry. What will we take from this Christmas season to carry us forward into Ordinary Time, to renew and strengthen our life of Christian discipleship?

Conclude by praying together today's psalm response taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 12:2-6, or pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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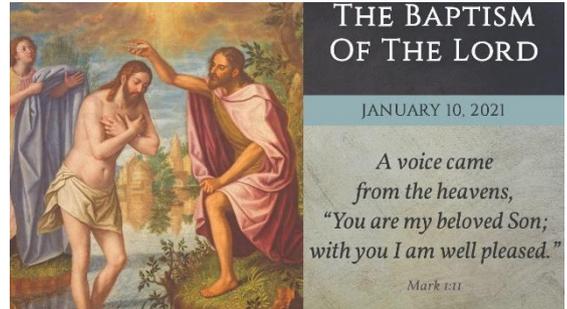
Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:7-11

Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

For those baptized as infants, the meaning and importance of Baptism is learned over time. We can help young children appreciate the gift of Baptism by teaching that Baptism made them pleasing to God, who received them as his children through this Sacrament.



Materials Needed

- Pictures of children and parents, sharing good times together

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show the group the pictures of children with their parents.
How do these parents feel about their children? (They are happy; they love them.)
How do you think your parents felt when you were born? (happy)
How do you know this? (You have seen the pictures; they have told you; others have reported this to you.)
I know that your parents continue are very happy and pleased that you are their children.
2. Say: **Today our Church remembers and celebrates an important event in the life of Jesus. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel to see if we can tell why this event was so important to Jesus.**
3. Read today's Gospel, Mark 1:7-11.
4. **What happened when Jesus was baptized by John?** (The sky opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus; a voice from heaven announced that God was pleased and said that Jesus was God's Son.)
How do you think this made Jesus feel? (Accept all reasonable responses.)
Why do you think that this might have been an important event in Jesus' life? (Accept all reasonable responses.)
5. **There was a time in your life when you were made a child of God. When you were baptized, Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to you, and you became God's child. When this happened, God was very happy. Baptism helps us to continue to live in ways that are pleasing to God.**
What are some of the things we do that please God? (prayer, learning about God, loving other people)
6. Conclude in prayer together that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in us to make us pleasing to God. Pray together the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of the Lord, Cycle B

Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:7-11 - Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

As the Christmas season ends, we return to the work of "ordinary time," which is the life of discipleship that began at Baptism. Older children's commitment to the life of Christian discipleship can be strengthened by remembering the importance of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Materials Needed

- A liturgical calendar, such as the one found in "The Year in Our Church" section of the *Finding God* Children's Book

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show the group the liturgical calendar. Note that a new liturgical year began with the first Sunday of Advent and that we are now concluding the liturgical season of Christmas. Ask the group to identify the liturgical season we begin next. (Ordinary Time)

Today is the last day of the liturgical season of Christmas. It may come as a surprise that our Gospel for today doesn't tell us a story about Jesus' childhood. Instead, we hear about how Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Today is a good day to think about our own Baptism.

2. ***What are some symbols we identify with Baptism?*** (water, oil, white garment, light) ***A dove is another symbol associated with Baptism. Why?*** (The symbol of the dove is often used to represent the Holy Spirit; if no one knows this, tell them that they will find out why in today's Gospel.)
3. ***When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, something amazing happened. In today's reading we hear about this event, and we learn what makes Christian Baptism different from the baptism of John the Baptist. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel so that we can learn what this difference is.***
4. Invite one or more volunteers to read aloud today's Gospel, Mark 1:7-11.
5. ***What happened when Jesus was baptized by John?*** (The sky opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus; a voice from heaven announced that Jesus was God's Son.) ***What does John the Baptist say will be different about the baptism that will be initiated by Jesus?*** (John baptized with water; those baptized in Jesus' name will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.)
6. Say: ***We received the gift of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized. The gifts of the Holy Spirit will be strengthened in us through the Sacrament of Confirmation. If we read further in Mark's Gospel, we would learn that filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus began the work of his ministry. In the sacraments, Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us so that we might be witnesses to Jesus in our world.***
7. Conclude in prayer together that through the grace of the sacraments we will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for our lives of discipleship. Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.

The Baptism of the Lord, Cycle B

Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:7-11 - Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

When Jesus was baptized by John, the Spirit descended upon him, and the voice from heaven announced God's favour with his beloved Son. We can invite young people to reflect on the ways the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives, helping them to live in ways pleasing to God.

Materials Needed

- Paper and pens
- CD player
- Instrumental music

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. ***Some people find it helpful to do a similar review of their personal lives. Why do you think people look back and review the past in this way?*** (Accept all reasonable answers, for example, to help remember and understand the things that have happened, to see things from a different perspective.)
2. ***In this Sunday's Gospel, we learn about an important event in the life of Jesus. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.***
3. Invite one or more volunteers to read Mark 1:7–11.
4. ***What does John the Baptist say about the one who will come after him?*** (He will be mightier than John; he will baptize with the Holy Spirit.) ***What happened when Jesus was baptized by John?*** (The Spirit descended upon Jesus, like a dove; a voice from heaven spoke, calling Jesus God's beloved Son.)
5. ***At our Baptism, the Holy Spirit was given to us, and we were made children of God. God is pleased to give us the grace of this sacrament and strengthens this grace in the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Holy Spirit is always working in our lives, helping us live in ways pleasing to God.***
6. Invite the young people to spend some time in quiet prayer. Distribute paper and pens to the young people. Have them draw a time line showing the past 12 months. Suggest that they can use this time line as they pray to help them recall highlights of the past year. Encourage them to ask to recognize how the Holy Spirit is working to make their faith stronger. Play instrumental music and allow time for quiet prayer.
7. Recommend that they pray often to the Holy Spirit for help and guidance. Conclude by praying together the psalm for this Sunday, from Isaiah 12:2–3,4–6.