

Read

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Psalm 104:1b-2, 3-4,
24-25, 27-28, 29-30 (1)

Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

LIVING THE WORD

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

January 13, 2019



REFLECTION

Today we celebrate the baptism of Jesus. Although Jesus did not need baptism (he was sinless), doing so revealed God's favor in his son and marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. When we were baptized, we were spiritually reborn into a divine life and a life of serving God in our world. That rebirth needs to continue throughout our lifetime as we strive to live in a good way, allowing God to transform our hearts so that we might lead others to him. Baptism gives us the grace to live as adopted children of God. This is an ongoing process, and we mature spiritually as God's children throughout our life. If you consider the pains that new parents take to bring their child into the world and bring him or her up, it can help us to better understand God's love. During our ongoing spiritual growth, God is like a parent who endures the pains of labor, the temper tantrums, and the daily falls as we try to walk. He never asks us to repay him for all the trouble we cause him, but instead, he is infinitely patient and unconditionally loves us. The Second Reading from Titus gives us a glimpse of the love God showers upon us throughout every step of our spiritual journey. We are heirs to God's Kingdom, and if we respond to his love, our future spiritual adulthood will be more beautiful than we can imagine.



ACTION

Ask a parent, priest, catechist, teacher, or youth minister to help you with this reflection if you are unfamiliar with the Rite of Baptism for Children.

Reminisce about your Baptism with your parents, godparents, siblings, and others who remember what the day was like (you were probably a baby and don't remember the ritual yourself). At Baptism, water is poured upon us, we are given a lighted candle, clothed with a white garment, and anointed with chrism. Look at pictures of the day. Ask your parents to show you your baptismal gown and candle, if they still have them. What did your parents promise on your behalf as you became initiated as a new member of God's family? What did God promise to you as his family member? Reflect on what Baptism means for you here and now. Finally, write a letter to God thanking him for bringing you into his family, and asking him to show you how to become a better person using the graces he bestowed on you.



Listen to Home Free's
version of

"How Great Thou Art"



[www.youtube.com
/watch?v=tXQpDDcrN-w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXQpDDcrN-w)

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What do the water, candle, baptismal gown, and chrism of Baptism represent?
- ❖ In what areas of your life do you need to ask God to help you mature?



January 13, 2019

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

LECTIONARY #21C

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Psalm 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30

Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Why does Jesus come to be baptized? He is sinless. Why does he need to receive John's baptism of repentance? Jesus answers, "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). In other words, Jesus is baptized because this is God's plan for him—and for us. Jesus is baptized because we need Baptism. He opens the way for us, sanctifying the water to wash away our sins. Jesus' baptism marks a change. After his baptism, he begins to proclaim the Kingdom of God, to gather disciples, to teach, to heal, and to work miracles. He begins his active ministry, leaving behind the "hidden years" of his quiet life with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth. It is the same for all Christians who follow Jesus into the waters of Baptism. Baptism is not an ending but a beginning. As we receive forgiveness for our sins, we also receive the call to live as faithful disciples and so build up the Kingdom.

Q FOCUS: *To see ourselves as children of God.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Tomorrow, we begin Ordinary Time. Ordinary Time: even the name of this period of liturgical time gives this time period an air of unimportance. The word *ordinary* usually equates to boring, unfulfilling, or stagnant. Yet, life is not meant to be lived always at fever pitch. The Latin word from which *ordinary* derives is *ordinarius*, which means

"according to the usual order." *Ordinal* also comes from the same root, *ordo*.

Church Teaching Connection

"Baptism, the door to life and to the kingdom of God, is the first sacrament of the New Law, which Christ offered to all, that they might have eternal life. He later entrusted this sacrament and the Gospel to his Church, when he told his apostles: 'Go, make disciples of all nations, and baptize them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Baptism is therefore, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the Gospel of Christ" (*Christian Initiation: General Introduction*, 3).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven

was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection (you may need to recap the other readings for teens since only the Gospel was proclaimed at this session):

In today's Gospel, we see and hear from John the Baptist. The people at that time thought that John might be the “Christ,” that he might be “the Anointed One.” However, John makes it very clear to them that he is only there to prepare the way for Jesus, who *is* the Anointed One. He reminds people that he (John) baptizes people with water, while Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.

► **What does John mean when he says, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”? How does Jesus baptize with fire?**

John also says that he is not worthy to loosen the thongs of the sandals of the one who is to come. This is an image of extreme humility; the one who would take off the sandals of another is the lowest slave, one at the bottom of the social standings of the time.

In today's Gospel narrative, we move quickly from John preparing people for the One who is to come to Jesus' baptism. We are told that after all the people had been baptized, Jesus also was baptized and was praying.

► **Why was Jesus baptized?**

► **Since John's baptism was for the forgiveness of sin and recognition of repentance, why did Jesus participate?**

He was free from all sin, so this baptism would not have been necessary. Jesus' baptism is a way for him to enter fully into the human experience, and through his baptism, he opens the waters of Baptism to us—in our Baptism, we are drawn into Christ's death and life, freed from original sin, and given the grace of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us throughout our lives. Jesus' baptism also begins his public ministry and concludes John's (notice that Jesus is baptized after “all the people”; in other words, all who had come to John were baptized). *(Take a moment to discuss Jesus' willingness to be baptized.)*

► **How is Jesus' baptism a sign of his immense love for us?**

“After . . . Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him. . . . And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” In this brief passage, we recognize the three persons of the Holy Trinity: the Holy Spirit descending upon the Son, with the voice of the Father coming from heaven.

The Gospel passage does not indicate whether everyone who was there heard the voice from heaven and saw the Holy Spirit descend like a dove. Imagine yourself at the river, as one who was just baptized by John. Some time of preparation, or listening to John, would have preceded this rite of repentance for you. You may have even been with John for a time, and knew others who went out to hear him preach. You might wonder who this man is who was the last to be baptized. You have not seen him before; yet John seems to know who he is. When he is baptized, you see a holy presence, like a dove, descend upon him, and you hear a voice declare, “You are my beloved Son.”

► **What does it mean to be God's beloved?**

► **How would your life change if you thought more often of how you are the beloved of God?**

Refer to the handout for today. Ask teens to comment about their experience talking to their parents about their Baptism. Talk to teens about what it means to be baptized Christians and what responsibilities they have: to go to Mass each Sunday and to allow God to work through them so they can be good Christian people in the world (people should know the teens are Christian by the way they live

their life). A good resource to use for this part of the discussion is From Mass to Mission for Teens published by Liturgy Training Publications.

Wrapping It Up

Ask these questions to close the reflection. You might also integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 118.

What are the signs of one who faithfully fulfills his or her baptismal promises?

In what ways can you better fulfill your baptismal promises?

Act on the Word

Stay the Path

Revisit the path you created as a class at the beginning of Advent (see page 82). Now that teens have gone through the Christmas season, ask them:

- ▶ Is there anything you want to add to that pathway?
- ▶ Are there any other ways that God has provided trailheads for you?
- ▶ Is there evidence of the light, the love, and the support you need from God in your every day life?

The Love of God

Listen to the song "With Every Act of Love" by Jason Gray. Pay special attention to the line, "God put a million, million doors in the world for his love to walk through. One of those doors is you!"

- ▶ What does that mean to you?
- ▶ What is one way you can be a doorway for God's love to walk through this week?

Organizations in Need

As a group, research organizations within your town (teachers, catechists, and youth ministers should prepare resources ahead of time for teens to review). Consider ways teens can help out and volunteer.

- ▶ Is there a school that has fewer resources than others?
- ▶ Is there a community center that hosts an after school program for children in need?
- ▶ What can you do as a group to help this group?

Closing Prayer

O God,
you are the giver of life, human and divine.
By your gift,
through water and the Holy Spirit,
we are reborn to everlasting life.
In your goodness,
continue to pour out your blessings upon us.
May you make us always, wherever we may be,
faithful members of his holy people.
Send your peace upon all who are gathered here.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

—Based on the Blessing and Dismissal from the Rite of Baptism for Children, 105

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends. Remind teens that today is the last day of Christmas Time and that next Sunday will be the first Sunday Mass in the new liturgical season of Ordinary Time.