

Read

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

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

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

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

LIVING THE WORD

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

January 9, 2022



REFLECTION

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). What was it like for Jesus to hear this message from God the Father at the end of today’s Gospel? The first thirty years of his earthly life are mostly a mystery. How did his full humanity interact with his full divinity? Did he talk with God the Father often as a young adult—and if so, did he usually hear this same voice from heaven in response?

God the Father affirms Jesus after his baptism: We are family. I love you. Keep up the good work. God embraces us with the same love at our baptism, a love that says you are mine. We’re in this together, forever. Many of us may not remember our baptism if we were initiated as babies. Through the waters of baptism, we join in communion with all the saints and loved ones who have gone before us and all those who have come after. Today’s feast is a chance to recommit to the family that, like Jesus, we were welcomed into through the holy waters of the first sacrament.



ACTION

Pay a visit to the baptismal font at your parish. Stick your hands in the water so they get nice and wet. (Remember to be reverent though, this is blessed water!) Sign yourself with the sign of the cross, calling to mind that you are an important part of the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If you still have your baptismal candle, bring it along and light it. Proclaim your baptismal vows out loud, renewing the faith your parents and godparents first professed to you. (You can also use the Nicene Creed or the Apostles’ Creed, which are professions of our faith.)



“Just as Jesus is the Father’s beloved Son, we too, reborn by water and the Holy Spirit, know that we are beloved children of God, brothers and sisters among many other brothers and sisters.”

— Pope Francis (@Pontifex)

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What memories do your parents or godparents have of your baptism day? (A question for them!)
- ❖ What is one part of the baptismal vow that you believe strongly? What is one part you want to explore more this year?



January 9, 2022

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

LECTIONARY #21C

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 or 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalms 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29b-30
or 29:1-2, 3-4, 3b, 9b-10

Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 or Acts 10:34-38

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

What does it mean to be washed clean? If a food or other elements fall on fabric, a detergent can remove that spot. Baptism cleanses our souls and makes us part of God's family. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River was a ritualistic washing, and it signifies the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. John offered baptism to the many people who sought him, and through it he helped them ready themselves for the coming of the Lord in the person Jesus. John never pointed to himself and his action as the saving act of God; John always pointed to Jesus as the one who was sent by God. At the end of today's Gospel reading, we hear how God told all listening that Jesus was his Son. This statement gives us a lens through which to interpret all of Jesus' actions in his ministry—that he is the Son of God sent to save us.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus' baptism was a sign of his divine Sonship and the beginning of his public ministry.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord marks the end of the Christmas season. Since most of the secular world celebrates Christmas from Thanksgiving (or even earlier!) until Christmas Day, this date is far past the time most stores and neighborhoods have returned their lights and decorations to storage. How wonderful that we have celebrated the season of

Christmas to its fullest potential! The incarnation of Christ at Christmas transformed the whole world. Throughout this season, the various feasts have helped us to see what impact Jesus' birth had on the world and reminded us that our salvation comes from one who is like us, but is also divine.

Church Teaching Connection

We believe that the sacrament of baptism is a salvific act. In baptism our sins are forgiven, and original sin is banished. This places us in a closer relationship with God. It also places us in a relationship with the whole Christian community throughout history and throughout the world. Through baptism we have a new life in Christ our Lord. We are made sons and daughters of God. We are strengthened by the grace of God to reject sin and follow the light of Christ. When we do sin, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith and guides us to repentance and redemption as we turn back to God (see *Christian Initiation, General Introduction, 2-6*).

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:

Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River marks the beginning of his public ministry. Until this point, we don't know much about Jesus' life, but after this point, we hear about his preaching, teaching, and healing. We hear in this reading God's blessing upon his son as Jesus begins his public ministry and prepares for the cross. We hear God's message loud and clear: Jesus is the Son of God, and God is pleased with him.

Why would Jesus be baptized? Ritual bathing and cleansing were important religious practices in ancient Judaism. Ritual washing was built into the lives of Jesus and his followers. The Scriptures specified ways in which people should wash before eating, and ways they should cleanse themselves after touching something or someone considered unclean. Certain animals like sheep, were considered clean and others, like pigs, considered unclean. These baptisms were rich with meanings of purity, spiritually and physically.

► **What are some differences between John's baptism and the sacrament of baptism we receive?** [The primary difference is that John's baptism is from a person and only meant as a reminder, whereas the sacrament of baptism is from God and makes us children of God.]

The baptism John gave to the people was not the sacramental baptism we receive today. However, it would still have been a significant sign and reminder to the people of God's promise. John gave people a ritualistic washing in the waters of the Jordan River. This river was the same body of water the Hebrew people crossed as they entered the Promised Land in the time of Joshua (Joshua 3). At that time, the men bearing the Ark of the Covenant stood firm while the river around them stopped flowing by the power of God. So for the Israelites, this river was of historical significance and a sign of God's power. This river was the one in which Jesus came to be baptized from his cousin, John.

► **Based on this information, what might the river have symbolized to the people at the time of John?**

► **What does water symbolize in general?**

God uses ordinary things to show his glory—a river, water, an ordinary person. John was a humble man, but he was also a prophet. He lived in the wild and ate bugs and honey. John, as we know from Scripture, was sent to help make people ready for Jesus Christ. In Scripture we hear that John remained steadfast in his role, knowing clearly who he was and who God is, and not mixing the two. He pointed to Christ in all that he did. He told people the Jesus was coming—he even stated that he wasn't worthy to untie Jesus' sandals.

John also explained how the baptism that Jesus would give us was different from the one he offered. Whereas John's baptism was of repentance and washing, Jesus would offer a baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. This was not something that John could offer. In the sacrament of baptism, God offers us the opportunity to enter into the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and become part of God's family. The fire John speaks of is figurative, purifying us of our sins, but it also calls to mind the first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to Christ's followers, and each person had a flame over his head. John knew the holiness that was Jesus, and he knew that Jesus was coming to fulfill God's promise of salvation to his people.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 106.

Jesus’ public ministry began with his baptism in the Jordan.

John baptized people as part of a ritualistic washing, to remind them of the need for repentance.

Jesus would bring a new baptism to his people.

Act on the Word

Theology of Baptism

For this activity, you will need copies of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for each group or each student. These can also be found online at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/index.cfm>.

Sacraments are visible signs of God’s grace that draw us closer to him. There are three sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church, the first of which is baptism. Today we will have a brief study on the sacrament of Baptism as it is practiced in the Church.

Divide the young people into small groups. Give a copy of the catechism to each group or each person. Briefly explain that the catechism is a collection of authoritative teachings of the Catholic Church. These are teachings that define our faith and our response to our faith. Invite the groups to turn to the section on baptism, which begins at paragraph number 1213 and goes through number 1284. Have each read through these sections and use the following questions as a guide for their discussions. The questions are meant to help them engage in discussion, and should not be answered homework-style.

- ✧ What does baptism have to do with salvation?
- ✧ Why is baptism a gift?
- ✧ What happens to our sin at baptism—original sin and personal sin?
- ✧ What stories in Scripture are a reflection of baptism?
- ✧ What does it mean to “put on Christ”?
- ✧ What are the words of baptism?
- ✧ Why do we need to help one another grow in faith after baptism?
- ✧ Who can baptize?

At the end of the activity, invite the small groups to share with the larger group anything that was new or that reinforced their understanding of baptism.

Closing Prayer

O God,
you called Jesus your beloved Son
at his baptism in the Jordan.
At our baptism, you adopted us.
Sustain us as we seek to follow Christ.
In our discipleship,
may we be faithful to you
and serve the needs of all.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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