

Read

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

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

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22



REFLECTION

The Gospel this Sunday describes Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit descends upon him like a dove, and a voice from heaven calls him "beloved" and affirms him as God's own Son. This moment marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and provides a powerful image of God's love and affirmation for each of us.

What would it feel like to hear God say he is pleased with you? What would it mean to truly know and believe you are beloved by God?

Living a life that pleases God involves striving to align our lives with God's will, treating others with kindness and compassion, seeking justice and mercy, and serving others with love. However, we don't have to earn God's love or prove ourselves worthy of it. God's love is freely given and cannot be lost. This truth can be a source of great comfort and strength when we feel overwhelmed by the pressures and expectations the world places on us.

May we strive to live in a way that reflects God's love and grace to those around us, and may we always remember that we are beloved children of God.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What do you think John the Baptist was referring to when he said that Jesus would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit?
- ❖ How would you have reacted if you had been at the baptism of Jesus?
What would you think of the dove and the voice from heaven?

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

January 12, 2025



ACTION

As beloved sons and daughters of God, made so through our baptism, Jesus sets us free from sin and fear and desires, that we not feel chained to those things anymore. Practice surrender and trust by loosening your grip on something that is causing you anxiety or stress. Give your worry to God in prayer and trust that he has a plan for your life beyond what you can see now. Consider sharing your experience with a trusted friend or mentor.



"Beloved"—Jordan Feliz

<https://youtu.be/pgJFUW3VenY>



January 12, 2025

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

LECTIONARY #21C

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

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

Titus 2:11-14 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

Christmas Time ends with the Baptism of the Lord, but it is also the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Today's Gospel tells us that John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' coming, announcing that Jesus would be far greater than he. At Jesus' baptism, God blessed him and acknowledged him as his Son. After this, Jesus began his ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. His baptism symbolized a new beginning and was the starting point for his mission. Our baptism initiates us into the life of God and the life of the faith community. We receive new life and become adopted sons and daughters of God. Like Jesus, we too are called to live out this new life through our ministry to others.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus' baptism was the beginning of his public ministry.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week on January 12, we celebrate the feast day of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700). She was born in France and found her calling in missionary work in the French settlement of what is now Montreal, Canada. She went to help begin a school for French and native children. She was a woman of action and organized other women to help her in her mission to educate and care for the children. Her mission and way of life appealed to many women and eventually she founded the Congregation of Notre

Dame. Her work was so influential and widespread that she was called "the Mother of the Colony" toward the end of her life. Marguerite was deeply committed to serving others and held a deep, unwavering love for God and her neighbor.

Church Teaching Connection

"The Holy Spirit, received for the first time on the day of our Baptism, opens our heart to the Truth, to all Truth. The Spirit impels our life on the challenging but joyful path of charity and solidarity toward our brothers and sisters. The Spirit gives us the tenderness of divine forgiveness and permeates us with the invincible power of the Father's mercy. Let us not forget that the Holy Spirit is a living and vivifying presence in those who welcome him, he prays in us and fills us with spiritual joy" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, January 10, 2016).

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:

Our Christian life is in a continual state of new beginnings. In the past couple of months, we began the liturgical season of Advent and the beginning of a new liturgical year. Then during Christmas Time, we celebrated the beginning of Jesus' life on earth. On Epiphany, we celebrated the beginning of the sharing of God's covenant with all people. And today, we celebrate the feast of Jesus' baptism, when Jesus' public ministry began.

► **What other new beginnings does our Church celebrate?**

John the Baptist was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary's relative. John received God's word and began preaching a baptism of repentance in order that the sins of the people might be forgiven. The people that heard John were filled with hope that he might be the messiah that they had been waiting for. They were searching for a new beginning that would come when God would send them a savior.

When Jesus was baptized, something different happened. The heavens opened and the Holy Spirit came upon him. God called him his beloved Son. What a sight that must have been! This was not what happened when everyone else was baptized by John.

Something new was taking place. The last we heard about Jesus in Luke's Gospel was when he was twelve; now he is an adult and ready to begin his ministry.

► **What are some Scripture stories that involve water? What did the water signify in those stories?**

► **What are some things that water symbolizes, in general? In what ways might water symbolize newness?**

The baptism John was giving was a type of ritualistic washing. It was an outward sign of the interior change he was calling people to. It was a sign that they were committing to changing their life and asking God for forgiveness. The baptism that Jesus received was not for this purpose. Jesus was sinless. He did not need this sign of ritual washing. Rather, his baptism served to highlight both his divine nature (he was the Son of God, fully divine) and his human nature (he was fully human). Jesus receiving the baptism of John was a sign of his identification with us. Even though he was sinless, he was one with us in our humanity and he humbled himself to join in communion with the people he came to serve. His baptism serves as a radical reminder of how much Jesus wanted to be with us and of the divine power he had to save us and draw us into a life with God.

We enter into this life with God through our own baptism. Our sacrament of baptism is not just an outward sign like John's was. It is made efficacious through Jesus' paschal mystery; he gives us the sacrament of baptism so that we might be saved and become adopted sons and daughters of God, members of God's family. God communicates his grace to us in this sacrament.

It is a sacrament of initiation into our Church, the beginning of new life in God and in our community of faith. It is the beginning of our faith journey. It reminds us that every day is a gift, a new opportunity to be reborn in the Holy Spirit and begin life anew in Jesus. We are called to stand together with our fellow baptized Christians and bear witness to the new life given to us through Jesus.

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 118.

God is always offering us new beginnings; when we repent, we choose to begin again in him.

Jesus humbled himself to be baptized though he was sinless.

Our baptism calls us to begin our lives anew in Jesus.

Act on the Word

What Do We Believe?

For this activity, you will need paper or journals, pens, and copies of the Nicene Creed (<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/nicene-creed>) and the Apostles' Creed (<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/apostles-creed>). You will also need copies of the baptismal promises, which you can ask your pastor about. You will need enough copies of these for each young person to have a copy of each document.

Pass out the copies you have prepared and paper and pens. Share with the teens that at their baptism, their parents, godparents, and faith community made a series of baptismal promises. These promises include renouncing sin and professing belief in God. At confirmation, these baptismal promises are renewed by the confirmandi. There are also other moments during the liturgical year when these promises are renewed by the community during Mass.

Read the baptismal vows together, with the youth minister reading the questions and the teens answering "I do." Then explain to them that these are the basic tenants of our faith, that we reject sin and believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These promises are a concise summary of the truths of our faith and a recognition of the

communion between members of the Christian community.

Share with the teens that even though these promises aren't read at every Mass, we do affirm our faith during Mass through the praying of the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed. These professions of faith have been part of our tradition since the early Church. We speak these words as a community united in one faith and in the one body of Christ. The word "creed" comes from the Latin word *credo*, meaning "I believe."

Ask the teens to individually write their own creed, using the prompt "I believe." In writing this, they can reflect on their own baptism, their life of faith, and their participation in the Catholic community. They should write down what they hold to be the truths of their faith, using the baptismal promises and the creeds as guides. If time allows, ask if anyone wishes to share with the larger group.

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.