

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

January 13, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *God our Creator, you offered your servant Jesus as Savior to all humankind. His coming among us opened our eyes to the light of justice, peace and salvation. By the river Jordan you anointed Jesus to carry out his mission. Anoint us now with your Holy Spirit so that we can hear the word you are speaking to us. This we pray through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: This feast celebrates Jesus as the anointed servant of God, the One who comforts people and proclaims God's Word (first reading), the One who came to save us out of mercy. This feast is a bridge between the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Ordinary Time.

Let us listen to God's word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

These verses are taken from the beginning of the second book of Isaiah (chapters 40-55), often called Deutero-Isaiah. In these chapters, the author is addressing the Israelite exiles towards the end of their time in Babylon.

The reading begins with words of comfort and tenderness for a people who spent 70 years in exile from their homeland. The exiles are directed to act out their deliverance even *before* they see evidence of it. They are to image a great highway on which they will travel home and to remove any obstacles that might block God's coming.

In verses 9-11, a second directive is given to the people living in Jerusalem. Their city is broken and depleted, and they are told to announce to the other vanquished cities of Judah that a new time is coming when God, like a good shepherd, is going to show a new concern for his flock.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 104

This psalm is a hymn of praise to God the Creator whose power and wisdom are manifested in the visible universe.

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

This reading has two parts: 2:11-14 and 3:4-7.

In 2:11-14, Paul speaks about the grace of God that has come to us through the coming of Christ, a grace that

enables us to reject pagan or ungodly ways and the grace to follow the ways of Jesus.

In 3:4-7, Paul reminds Titus and all Christians that their current status as a new people is totally the result of God's mercy and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL COMMENTARY: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Let us now read the Gospel commentary privately underlining anything that strikes us.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Luke places Jesus' baptism before the start of his public ministry to identify Jesus as the chosen servant foretold by Isaiah (first reading).

Luke's account of Jesus' baptism is striking in that it underplays the actual water event at the hand of John. Instead, it highlights the prayer of Jesus, the descent of the Spirit, and the heavenly voice proclaiming Jesus as God's beloved Son.

The Gospel has two distinct but related events. In the *first*, John disavows that he is Christ. People may have thought that John was the Messiah because Jesus submitted to him for baptism. The *second* event reports the extraordinary circumstances that followed Jesus' own baptism by John. The two incidents are connected by reference to the Holy Spirit.

Luke always presents Jesus as praying before making major decisions. It's no surprise then that we find him praying during his baptism. In response to his prayer, the Holy Spirit descends on him in visible form (as a dove) at the beginning of his mission, just as the Spirit will come in visible form on the apostles at Pentecost at the beginning of their mission. The Father's voice puts the seal of divine approval on Jesus and on the mission he is about to begin.

This Spirit will empower Jesus (and his followers) to do the works of God, i.e., to preach with authority, heal the sick, cast out demons, and obey God to the point of death.

Having given the participants time to read the commentary, move into the faith-sharing questions.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse in the Gospel caught your attention. Why?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. The first reading begins with the words: "Comfort, give comfort to my people." What comforts you in painful and difficult times? How can you be a comforting presence to others?

3. In the Gospel, the "people were filled with expectation" of the Christ. What is an expectant faith and what are some steps we can take to acquire it?

4. All of the baptized have been baptized with the Holy Spirit at their Baptism. Some have received a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit through their involvement in the Charismatic Renewal. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your spiritual life?

5. What is Jesus saying to you this Sunday about how a faithful disciple should act?

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God's word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can *act* on this week's readings. Suggestions: Name someone you can comfort and how. Commit to praying for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

SHARED PRAYER ON THE READINGS

Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestions: "Lord, you know I need your comfort and mercy, please help me to experience it." "Lord, I pray for a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Please help me to be open and respond affirmatively."

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

FACILITATOR: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Breather in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, than, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy.
Amen.*

- St. Augustine



"A New Intimacy with Christ"
A Day of Reflection presented by
Deacon Jim & Pat Brogdan
Sat. January 19, 8:30 am – 3 pm
Divine Mercy Parish, Merritt Island
Tickets \$12/ Info 321-405-2374
sccspacecoast@gmail.com