

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

January 10, 2021 B

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: *Thank you, Jesus, for gathering us together as we prepare to celebrate your baptism and the beginning of your public ministry. Open our eyes to the meaning of our baptism. Fill us with your Spirit and help us never to be afraid to be public about our commitment to you. 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 reads focus statement: The Baptism of the Lord marks the end of the Christmas season and the transition to Ordinary Time (It is the First Sunday in Ordinary Time). It also marks the beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry. The First Reading is a poetic invitation to seek the Lord and receive his blessings. In the Second Reading, John states, among other things, that true love of God is shown by faithfulness to his commandments. In the Gospel, we listen to Mark's account of Jesus' baptism.

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 55:1-11

The exhortation "to seek the Lord while he may be found" does not mean that God is about to relocate or hide ☺. God is always present to us. But we may not always have a desire to seek him. The reading also reminds us that "God's ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts." God is a God of surprises. A part of developing a strong faith life is noticing 'God's surprises' whether they are good or painful.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Isaiah 12:2-5

With God as our Savior, we need not be afraid.

SECOND READING: 1John 5:1-9

This reading is a testimony to Trinitarian faith. It describes God the Father as the One who begets (the Son); it identifies Jesus as the Son of God; and it credits the Spirit as the One who testifies to the triumph of Jesus' death and Resurrection. It also shows the way believers participate in this Trinitarian reality.

Faith in Jesus makes us children of God. The commandments to be observed are not burdensome. The reference to 'blood and water' points to Jesus' baptism and sacrifice on the Cross.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Mark: 1:7-11

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.

GOSPEL: Mark 1:7-11

The Gospel has two parts. In the first part, John unequivocally states that Jesus is much more powerful than he is that he is not even worthy to perform such menial task as loosening the strap of Jesus' sandal. In saying this, John is not demeaning himself but rather glorifying Jesus.

In the second part of the Reading, John contrasts their respective baptisms. His is with water whilst Jesus' will be with the Holy Spirit.

No explanation is given as to why Jesus would submit to a sinner's baptism. Theologians usually interpret it as a symbol of Jesus' *solidarity* with sinful humanity.

The coming of the Spirit accompanied by the words: “*You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased*” is a beautiful act of divine affirmation on Jesus. The Spirit also is the one who will empower the human Jesus to do the works of God: preach with authority, heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.
2. Jesus’ baptism was the beginning of his *public* ministry. For many Catholics, their faith is a *private* matter. If you are public about your faith, when did this begin to happen? What helped you to be public about your Catholic faith? If you tend to be very private about your faith, what do you think causes you to be so private?
3. What does it mean to you to be a baptized Catholic?
4. Do you think the Church should baptize children of non-churchgoing Catholics?
5. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestion: Meditate on the awesome truth that through Baptism, we are in Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can be the arms, mouth, feet and heart of Christ to a hurting world.

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.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Father, thank you for baptizing me into your beloved Son Jesus and giving me your Holy Spirit to help me to live like Jesus in my small part of your creation.*

CONCLUDING PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: What are you grateful for? For what and for whom do you wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (Together)

*Breathe 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 may love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy.
Amen.*

- St. Augustine