

Sunday Message

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

THE WORD

Year C • 12 January 2025 • Psalter Week 1



SACRAMENT OF CONNECTION

LUKE 3:15-16.21-22

The Baptism of the Lord marks the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. St Luke tells us that after his baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus and a voice from heaven reveals that he is the favoured one of God. Now he is anointed for ministry.

Jesus' baptism marks the start of his public life just as our baptism marks the start of our new life as his brothers and sisters. If we have been baptised as infants, it was our parents and godparents who took on the responsibility of nurturing our relationship with God until such time as we were mature enough to live our Christian faith for ourselves. Adult baptism, on the other hand, is a decision taken by the individual for him or her self. By asking to be baptised they have already discerned that they want to follow Christ.

But baptism is not the end of the journey. As in the case of Jesus, it simply marks the beginning. Washed with water and anointed with oils, we are prepared for the journey ahead. Jesus asked to be baptised not only as an example to us but so that he also would be given the strength to follow his true calling. It is encouraging for us to know that Jesus, the human being, knew his need of God. ■

REFLECT

We can understand baptism as the sacrament of connection.

First, it connects us with Jesus. Through baptism, we become Jesus' sisters and brothers, intimately united with him. Being connected with Jesus is like being connected to a life source, a sure guiding force. Simply put, he shows us how to live, illumines the path for us to follow.

If we want to know about love, what true love is - we need only look to Jesus. If we want to know about justice and concern for the common good, we look to Jesus. If we want to know about healthy relationships, what they're like, how to foster them, we look to Jesus. If we want to know about forgiveness, its necessity, its awesome liberating power, we look to Jesus. If we want to find true happiness in this world and salvation in the next, we look to Jesus. If we want to know how to live life well, to live with integrity and moral purpose, we look to Jesus. In good times and in bad, we look to Jesus, who always guides our path, who never lets us down - our comforter, our shield, our hope, our rock, our salvation.

Second, baptism connects us with each other. We become sisters and brothers, members of one family. We know the saying, "Blood is thicker than water," and we know what it means. Family comes first. Our blood relatives - grandparents, parents, children, siblings, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins - these are the people who mean most to us, the people we treasure above all others. We'd go to any lengths to protect our family. Blood is thicker than water.

Except that, for Christians, it's the other way around. Water is thicker than blood. The water of baptism is thicker than blood. For through baptism, we become part of a new family, a much larger family, the community of believers, the communion of saints. Baptism connects us intimately with each other.

This means we're responsible for each other. The book of Genesis tells us that God created humanity in God's own image, that every person, every single, solitary, human being, is a reflection of God's very self. All are equal in God's eyes because all are

made in God's likeness. We must see each other the way God sees us, and relate to each other as family, as one.

But just as our blood family isn't perfect, we know our Christian family isn't perfect either, that we're a long way from being that community of justice, love and peace we are called to be, that our Church leadership and institution have also shown themselves to be far from perfect.

Our baptism commits us as members of one family to lives of love and service: to see suffering and try to ease it, see injustice and try to end it, see hunger and try to feed it, see brokenness and try to heal it, see racism and try to defeat it, see war and try to stop it, see any situation where love is lacking and try to fill it, see the example of Jesus and try to follow it.

If we live like this, faithful to our baptismal promises, then on judgement day God will say to us as God said of Jesus at his baptism: "Here is my beloved who makes me proud." ■

DO

You won't remember the day of your baptism (unless you were baptised as an adult), but take some time to think about that day and its significance. What does it mean to you now?

LEARN

Through our baptism we have become consecrated to Christ, part of a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

Through baptism, we are one family, brothers and sisters of Christ and of each other.

Our baptism impels us to play a full and active part in the life of the Church.

SAY

"I thank you, Lord, for the gift of faith and for being part of your Church. Help me to serve you faithfully every day."

PRAY

Think of your local church, of all who have been baptised there. Think of the members of your own family. Pray for them and for all the baptised throughout the world.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*After the Lord was baptised, the heavens were opened,
and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove,
and the voice of the Father thundered:
This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who, when Christ had been baptised in the River Jordan
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,
grant that your children by adoption,
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,
may always be well pleasing to you...

Or

O God, whose Only Begotten Son
has appeared in our very flesh,
grant, we pray, that we may be inwardly transformed
through him whom we recognise as outwardly like ourselves...

Amen.

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

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

Go on up to a high mountain,
O Sion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
'Behold your God!'
Behold, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 104(103):1b-2. 3-4. 24-25. 27-28. 29-30. R. 1

*R: Bless the LORD, O my soul!
My God, how great you are!*

- O LORD my God, how great you are,
clothed in majesty and honour,
wrapped in light as with a robe!
You stretch out the heavens like a tent. **R.**
- On the waters you lay the foundation for your dwelling.
You make the clouds your chariot;
you ride on the wings of the wind.
You make the winds your messengers,
flame and fire your servants. **R.**

- How many are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.
Vast and wide is the span of the sea,
with its creeping things past counting,
living things great and small. **R.**
- All of these look to you
to give them their food in due season.
You give it, they gather it up;
you open wide your hand, they are well filled. **R.**
- You hide your face, they are dismayed;
you take away their breath, they die,
returning to the dust from which they came.
You send forth your spirit, and they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth. **R.**

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

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus.

Beloved: The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL cf. Luke 3:16

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

He who is mightier than I is coming, said John.
He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 3:15-16. 21-22

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, 'I baptise you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

Now when all the people were baptised by John the Baptist and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the offerings
we have brought to honour the revealing of your beloved Son,
so that the oblation of your faithful
may be transformed into the sacrifice of him
who willed in his compassion
to wash away the sins of the world... **Amen.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Behold the One of whom John said:
I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished with these sacred gifts,
we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord,
that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten Son,
we may be your children in name and in truth... **Amen.**