



## THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Year B

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

Acts 10:34-38

Mark 1:7-11

### Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel, a clear glass bowl of water and a small mirror rest on a table in the gathering place.)*

We stand with Jesus at the Jordan and hear him acknowledged by the Voice from the cloud as Beloved. Last week we marked the feast of Epiphany. How did you open yourself to discerning God's manifesting God's self to you in the events of this past week?

### Prayer

*(The candle is lit. The community attends in quiet to the movement of God in their hearts and lives. After a time of silence, the prayer continues as follows.)*

Leader: Almighty ever living God, who when Christ had been baptized 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. We pray through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Roman Missal. Opening Collect  
The Baptism of the Lord

All: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

I: Give to the LORD, you sons of God,  
give to the LORD glory and praise,  
give to the LORD the glory due his name;  
adore the LORD in holy attire.

All: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

II: The voice of the LORD is over the waters,  
the Lord, over vast waters.  
The voice of the LORD is mighty;  
the voice of the LORD is majestic.

All: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

III: The God of glory thunders,  
and in his temple all say "Glory!"  
The LORD is enthroned above the flood;  
the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

All: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

*(Members join in singing, "We Belong to You". The song may be found on the Internet.)*

## **HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL**

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

## Reflection

This week’s gospel is stunning and beautiful in its simplicity and in its power. Mark’s depiction of the Lord’s Baptism allows us to see, feel, and hear the drama of it all. The heavens are torn open, and we hear the glorious words: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

The Lord’s Baptism serves as the beginning of his public ministry, and he is sent forth as the *Beloved* of God; there is no doubt that he is cherished by the Father. Often, people ask why the Lord had to be baptized since one of the main purposes of baptism is to destroy the power of original sin. He, of course, was like us in all ways except for sin. He was baptized to sanctify the waters of baptism for *us*.

The preface for the Mass reads: “. . .in the waters of the Jordan you revealed with signs and wonders a new baptism, so that through the voice that came down from heaven we might come to believe in your Word dwelling among us.”

Quite simply, just as Jesus was revealed as God’s Beloved Son, we too are shown forth in our baptism as beloved daughters and sons of God. The Beloved is not only the Lord, but also each one of us and all the baptized. This feast is our feast, a celebration of our new identity, as those who are a new creation in Christ. Savor today the richness of your baptism and that of your loved ones. We are the *beloved* standing before the *Beloved*, just as surely as if we were standing in the waters of the Jordan.

## Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ How do you experience a call to ministry of some kind?
- ◆ Imagine the scene of the Lord’s Baptism. Hear the sounds, feel its wonder. What does the voice heard from the heavens mean to you?

- ◆ How deeply do you feel yourself to be *beloved* by God?

## HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Respect water. Be conscious this week of conserving water and be deliberate about how you use it.
- ◆ Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week.
- ◆ Watch the documentary **Flow: For the Love of Water** ([www.flowthefilm.com/](http://www.flowthefilm.com/)). One of its central questions is: Can anyone really own water?

### Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment. Following this sharing, the prayer continues as follows.)*

Leader: 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 recognize as outwardly like ourselves. We pray through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Roman Missal. Opening Collect  
The Baptism of the Lord

*(The mirror is passed. Members pause to acknowledge themselves as beloved by God. The session concludes with members signing themselves with water from the bowl and exchanging a sign of peace.)*

