



LIVING THE GOSPEL



The Baptism of The Lord January 11th 2026

Theme: "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on Him'.

Gathering Prayer

All: 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. 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. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matt 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus appeared: he came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ John tried to dissuade him. 'It is I who need baptism from you' he said 'and yet you come to me!' ¹⁵ But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands'. At this John gave in to him. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. ¹⁷ And a voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on him'.

Gospel Focus

There are two important proclamations of God's word in today's gospel: one is the message of John the Baptist to his disciples, and the other is the voice of the Father to his Son. In his baptism, Jesus is acknowledged as the beloved Son of the Father. In our own baptism, we get the message-that God has chosen us as his sons and daughters. This is what the gospel, the "good news" is all about! We often lose sight of this essential truth and get bogged down in other things-stress, our jobs, our families, and even our desire to follow God. All these things can get in the way of recognizing that we are beloved. When you look at the Scriptures this week and your role at Mass, do you see this as a way of inviting others into their "belovedness" or is it just another task on the to-do list? In preparation for these readings, spend some time in prayer allowing God to love you as son or daughter. Recognizing God's love in your own life, you can more effectively share it through the Scriptures at the ambo.

Gospel Reflection

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S.Lewis explores the necessity of Jesus' humanity for the salvation won by his crucifixion. Echoing the sentiments expressed by Saint Athanasius in *On the Incarnation of the Word*, Lewis explains the predicament of humanity's need for justification and salvation but our inability to repay the debt of our sinfulness

perfectly on our own. Our justification is predicated on repentance, or a surrendering of our selfish ways to instead embrace the will of God. He writes that the "only person who could [repent] perfectly would be a perfect person-and he would not need it." Therefore, Christ took on human flesh in the incarnation. Through his full humanity, he took on the debt of sinfulness that humans incurred throughout our history. And on behalf of all humanity, he surrendered his will, perfectly and even unto death, for the justification of all.

In today's gospel, John questions Jesus' need for baptism. As Christians, we might hear John's objection through the lens of our baptismal theology; for example, that in the sacrament of baptism, a person is forever claimed by God as an adopted son or daughter; joined to the Body of Christ that is the church, and that person is cleansed from the original sin that stains all of humanity. From this perspective, Jesus seemingly has no need for baptism as the Son of God. However, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is Emmanuel, "God is with us" (Matt 1:23), and he humbly and willingly submits himself to be baptized and united fully with the humanity that he will save. Jesus responds that his baptism is necessary to "fulfil all righteousness," a term that is defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "the rectitude of divine love" (1991). At Jesus' baptism, all three persons of the Trinity are present with humanity, harkening back to the presence of the Trinity at creation, when God the Creator spoke life onto earth through the Word while the Spirit was "sweeping over the waters" (Gen 1:2). So too in our own baptism: Christ not only offers us freedom from a life of sin but the grace of divine love is present and poured upon us, so that in our humanity we might participate in the love that the Trinity shares.

As the baptized, we have been initiated into Christ's life, death and resurrection. Through God's grace, the sin and the selfishness we experience within us is no longer a death, and we are promised the gift of Christ's life now and being risen to eternal life in Christ. However, sin and evil continue to forge their way into the world and into our hearts. The sign of the cross, with or without holy water, can be a prayer that reminds us that we have been chosen by God, claimed as God's own, through the death and life of Jesus Christ. As we accept the gift offered by Christ through his sacrifice and join our imperfect repentance to his perfect repentance, we can also hear the words of the Father, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. "

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

¹ Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have endowed him with my spirit that he may bring true justice to the nations. ² He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets. ³ He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame. ⁴ Faithfully he brings true justice; he will neither waver, nor be crushed until true justice is established on earth, for the islands are awaiting his law.

⁶ I, Yahweh, have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand and formed you; I have appointed you as covenant of the people and light of the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison, and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10

R: Yahweh blesses his people with peace.

Pay tribute to Yahweh, you sons of God, tribute to Yahweh of glory and power, tribute

to Yahweh of the glory of his name, worship Yahweh in his sacred court. **(R)**

The voice of Yahweh over the waters! The God of glory thunders.
Yahweh over the multitudinous waters! The voice of Yahweh in power!
The voice of Yahweh in splendor! **(R)**

The voice of Yahweh sets the terebinths shuddering, stripping the forests bare. In his palace everything cries, 'Glory!' Yahweh sat enthroned for the Flood, Yahweh sits enthroned as a king forever. **(R)**

Second Reading — Acts 10:34-38

³⁴ Then Peter addressed them: 'The truth I have now come to realise' he said 'is that God does not have favourites, ³⁵ but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.

³⁶ 'It is true, God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that *the good news of peace was brought* by Jesus Christ—but Jesus Christ is Lord of all men. ³⁷ You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. ³⁸ *God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit* and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

444. The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son".(Cf. Mt 3:17; Cf. 17:5) Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence.(Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36) He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God".(Jn 3:18) In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God", (Mk 15:39) that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning.

535 Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan. (Cf. Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22.) John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". (Lk 3:3.) A crowd of sinners (Cf. Lk 3:10-14; Mt 3:7; 21:32.)—tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes—come to be baptized by him. "Then Jesus appears." The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son." (Mt 3:13-17.) This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

536. The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".(Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:12) Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death.(Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50) Already he is coming to "fulfill all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins.(Mt 3:15; Cf. 26:39) The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son.(Cf. Lk 3:22; Is 42:1) The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him".(Jn 1:32-33; Cf. Is 11:2) Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened"(Mt 3:16)—the heavens that Adam's sin had closed—and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

608. After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".(Jn 1:29; Cf. Lk 3:21; Mt 3:14-15; Jn 1:36) By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover.(Is 53:7,12; Cf. Jer 11:19; Ex 12:3-14; Jn 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7) Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."(Mk 10:45)

701. *The dove.* At the end of the flood, whose symbolism refers to Baptism, a dove released by Noah returns with a fresh olive-tree branch in its beak as a sign that the earth was again habitable.(Cf. Gen 8:8-12) When Christ comes up from the water of his baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down upon him and remains with him.(Cf. Mt 3:16 and parallels) The Spirit comes down and remains in the purified hearts of the baptized. In certain churches, the Eucharist is reserved in a metal receptacle in the form of a dove (*columbarium*) suspended above the altar. Christian iconography traditionally uses a dove to suggest the Spirit.

713. The Messiah's characteristics are revealed above all in the "Servant songs."(Cf. Isa 42:1-9; cf. Mt 12:18-21; Jn 1:32-34; then cf. Isa 49:1-6; Cf. Mt 3:17; Lk 2:32; finally cf. Isa 50:4-10 and Isa 52:13-53:12) These songs proclaim the meaning of Jesus' Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to give life to the many: not as an outsider, but by embracing our "form as slave."(Phil 2:7) Taking our death upon himself, he can communicate to us his own Spirit of life.

1223. All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan.(Cf. Mt 3:13) After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."(Mt 28:19-20; Cf. Mk 16:15-16)

1224. Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to "fulfill all righteousness."(Mt 3:15) Jesus' gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying.(Cf. Phil 2:7) The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his "beloved Son."(Mt 3:16-17)

1286. In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission.(Cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Lk 4:16-22) The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God.(Cf. Mt 3:13-17; Jn 1:33-34) He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him "without measure."(Jn 3:34)

Sharing and Discussion

1. In asking for baptism, Jesus shows humility and trust in the Father's plan. How might His example inspire the way you respond to God in your own life?

2. How do the Father's words, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," speak to you as God's beloved? How might this awareness of His love guide the way you relate to and serve others?

3. Through your baptism, you participate in Jesus' death and resurrection. What does this participation mean to you personally?"

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving God, you call us your beloved. Hear the prayers of your beloved community this day and answer according to your will. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen