

## Weekend Readings & Reflections January 8-9, 2022 – Baptism of the Lord

**Reflection:** *The Liturgy last week revealed the mystery of God’s plan—that in Jesus all peoples, symbolized by the Magi, have been made “coheirs” to the blessings promised to Israel. This week, we’re shown how we claim our inheritance. Jesus doesn’t submit to John’s baptism as a sinner in need of purification. He humbles Himself to pass through Jordan’s waters in order to lead a new “exodus”—opening up the promised land of heaven so that all peoples can hear the words pronounced over Jesus today, words once reserved only for Israel and its king: that each of us is a beloved son or daughter of God (see Genesis 22:2; Exodus 4:22; Psalm 2:7). Jesus is the chosen servant Isaiah prophesies in today’s First Reading, anointed with the Spirit to make things right and just on earth. God puts His Spirit upon Jesus to make Him “a covenant of the people,” the liberator of the captives, the light to the nations. Jesus, today’s Second Reading tells us, is the One long expected in Israel, “anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and power.” The word messiah means “one anointed” with God’s Spirit. King David was “the anointed of the God of Jacob” (see 2 Samuel 23:1–17; Psalm 18:51; 132:10, 17). The prophets taught Israel to await a royal offshoot of David, upon whom the Spirit would rest (see Isaiah 11:1–2; Daniel 9:25). That’s why the crowds are so anxious at the start of today’s Gospel. But it isn’t John they’re looking for. God confirms with His own voice what the angel earlier told Mary: Jesus is the Son of the Most High, come to claim the throne of David forever (see Luke 1:32–33). In the Baptism that He brings, the voice of God will hover over the waters as a fiery flame, as we sing in today’s Psalm. He has sanctified the waters, made them a passageway to healing and freedom—a fountain of new birth and everlasting life.*



### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome our discussion on the First Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Baptism of the Lord. Let’s begin this time together by calling on the presence of the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who descended upon Christ at his Baptism in the Jordan river:

**All:** Holy Spirit, lead me to the wisdom today that unlocks the path to God’s will for me in the large and small choices of my life so that in all my thoughts, words, and deeds, I might give glory to God. Amen.

**Leader:** What an amazing experience it must have been for those present at Jesus’ baptism to hear the Father’s voice and see the Spirit descend upon Jesus. As we watch the video, prayerfully ponder how through the sacrament of Baptism which you have received, it is as if God the Father says the same thing to you as he said to Jesus: “You are my beloved son (or daughter); with you I am well pleased.” Consider three key words in this statement: beloved, son, and well pleased. What does it mean to you to know you are truly beloved by God; that you are a son of the heavenly Father; and that with you, God is well pleased?

(Play the video on [FORMED.org](https://www.formed.org) - [Opening the Word – The Baptism of the Lord \(Year C\)](#))

#### Our Baptismal Promises

Do you reject Satan? **R. I do.** And all his works? **R. I do.** And all his empty promises? **R. I do.** Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth? **R. I do.** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father? **R. I do.** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting? **R. I do.** God, the all-powerful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and forgiven all our sins. May he also keep us faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ forever and ever. **R. Amen**

## FIRST READING ~ Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 ~

Thus says the LORD: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street, a bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching. I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

*The prophet Isaiah speaks often of the promise that God will send a Messiah. Today's prophecy foretells Jesus' coming. Celebrating Jesus' Baptism, we learn also of our own 'job description' to live following Jesus' lifestyle and example in the world.*

- *Have you made your baptism personal and meaningful? What does it mean for you to be: chosen, upon whom I have put my spirit, bring forth justice, called personally for the victory of justice? Have you recognized God trying to take you by the hand and form you, ask you to be an example and light for others, transform people's lives who are blind and suffering in darkness?*

## SECOND READING

~ Acts 10:34-38

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

*Acts 10 is a very important chapter and experience in the life of St Peter. Peter was Jewish and was brought up in strict observance knowing what was considered clean and unclean. Non-Jews (Gentiles / Greeks) were considered 'unclean'. If you entered their home or ate with them, you became unclean. Peter is told by God to go into Cornelius' home (He was a gentile and a despised Roman soldier!). Peter has a significant conversion of the mind.... people of every nation are acceptable to God.*

- *Who do you consider to be 'clean' 'unclean'? What obstacles did Peter have to overcome to go into Cornelius' house? What obstacles do you have to overcome?*



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

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

*It was a custom for disciples to carry the master's sandals. It was a sign of discipleship. The image John shares is he is not even worthy to bow down and undo the sandals of Jesus.*

- *The holiness and distinctiveness between John and Jesus is emphasized. Why?*

*Historical and theological writing is present in this Baptism scene of Jesus. Isaiah had cried out to God in the Old Testament – open the heavens and come down! Now the clouds are pushed apart, the spirit of God descends and God's voice is heard. Here he is! The Messiah. The promised one. My Son.*

- *Imagine being at this scene. Imagine this is your baptism scene. What do you feel? Think?*

*You may have been too young to remember your own baptism. It does not mean that you cannot now become conscious of what happened and what it means today. A special prayer was prayed over you as part of your anointing (Christ-ing) that you be a Priest, Prophet and King. Your call is to be a Priest (bring the world to God and God to the world), Prophet (listen to the scriptures and speak God's word of comfort and challenge to the world), and King (to lead the world not follow the world.)*

- *How could you grow in awareness and expression of your God-given calling?*

## MEDITATION

Do you want to be on fire for God? John the Baptist said that the Messiah would "baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Fire in biblical times was associated with God and with His action in the world and in the lives of His people. God sometimes manifested His presence by use of fire, such as the burning bush which was not consumed when God spoke to Moses (Exodus 3:2). The image of fire was also used to symbolize God's glory (Ezekiel 1:4, 13), His protective presence (2 Kings 6:17), His holiness (Deuteronomy 4:24), His righteous judgment (Zechariah 13:9), and His wrath against sin and evil (Isaiah 66:15-16). Fire can also be a sign of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11-12 and Acts 2:3). God's fire both purifies and cleanses us, and burns within us a passionate love, holy desire, and reverent fear (respect and awe) of God and His Word.

Jesus came to give us the fire of his Spirit that we may radiate the joy and truth of the Gospel to a world in desperate need of God's light and truth. His word has power to change and transform our lives that we may be burning lights pointing others to Jesus Christ. Like John the Baptist, we too are called to give testimony to the light and truth of Jesus Christ.

John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Why did Jesus, the Sinless One, submit himself to John's baptism? In this humble submission we

see a foreshadowing of the "baptism" of His bloody death upon the cross. Jesus' baptism is the acceptance and the beginning of His mission as God's suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). He allowed himself to be numbered among sinners. Jesus submitted Himself entirely to His Father's will. Out of love He consented to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins.

The Father proclaimed His entire delight in his Son and spoke audibly for all to hear. The Holy Spirit, too, was present as He anointed Jesus for his ministry which began that day as He rose from the waters of the Jordan river. Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all who come to believe in Him. At His baptism the heavens were opened and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, signifying the beginning of a new creation.

How can we enter into the mystery of Jesus' humble self-abasement and baptism? Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 AD), an early church father tells us: "Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with Him; let us go down with Him to be raised with Him; and let us rise with Him to be glorified with Him." Examine Jesus' humility and ask the Holy Spirit to forge this same attitude in your heart. As you do, heaven will open for you as well.

The Lord Jesus is ever ready to renew and refashion us in His likeness through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit - and He anoints us for mission as ambassadors of His kingdom of righteousness (moral goodness), peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). We are called to be the "light" and salt" of His kingdom that radiate the beauty and aroma of His mercy and goodness to those around us (Matthew 5:13,15-16). The Lord Jesus wants His love and truth to shine through us that many others may find new life, freedom, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with his Holy Spirit that you may radiate the joy of the Gospel to those around you.

- *Do you want to be on fire for God?*
- *Do you want the Lord's power, grace, and love to burn brightly in your life?*
- *Do you know the joy of trust and submission to God?*
- *Do you want to see your life transformed in the likeness of Christ? And do you want to become a more effective instrument of the Gospel?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing, let us pray that we may be led by the Holy Family, and if we feel we have lost Christ, find Him again in His Father's house...

**ALL:** Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit and with the fire of your love and goodness. May I always find joy and delight in seeking to please you in doing your will just as you have delighted in the joy of pleasing your Father and doing his will. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by [www.maristlaitynz.org](http://www.maristlaitynz.org), were shared with permission from [www.livingtheword.org.nz](http://www.livingtheword.org.nz).]

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