

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD



Baptism

God our Father, giver of life,
your Son immersed himself in the
human condition.
By becoming one with us
he made it possible for us to become one
with you.
By Baptism you free us from sin,
recreate us,

and empower us with your Spirit.
As we strive to live as members of
Christ's Body,
lead us steadily along the path of holiness.
Cleanse us from the sins that still stain us.
Enliven the flame of faith within us.
Keep us attentive to your Word.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, January 12, 2020

Anointed Ones



Today's Readings: Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7; Psalm 29:1–2, 3–4, 3, 9–10 (11b); Acts 10:34–38; Matthew 3:13–17. The baptism John performed was a sign of the new era to come, but John himself could not bring about that new era. That power belonged to God's Son. Recognizing this, John does not want to baptize the one who is so much greater than he, but Jesus insists. Despite the power he has, Jesus acts humbly. He enters into solidarity with the sinners he has come to save.

By submitting to John's baptism, Jesus "fulfills all righteousness"—that is, he carries out God's plan of salvation, a plan foretold in passages such as in our First Reading. God speaks through Isaiah to declare that he will grasp the hand of his servant, whom he has chosen for a special pur-

pose. In the Second Reading, we again hear this language of election as Peter speaks of Jesus as God's anointed one.

In the ancient world, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed to show that God chose them for that role. The title *Christ* is from the Greek word for "anointed one." *Messiah* is the Hebrew term. The descent of God's Spirit upon Jesus and the words pronounced by God at Jesus' baptism reveal that Jesus is God's chosen one.

At our Baptism, we were incorporated into Christ's Body, empowered by God's Spirit, and anointed to act like Christ as priests, prophets, and kings. God calls us to worship, to proclaim the Gospel, and to work alongside his Son until he brings about the fullness of his kingdom.



THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Ordinary Time

The Ministry of Jesus

The cycle of readings for Sundays and weekdays reflects the wisdom of the Catholic Church. During Ordinary Time we are led steadily through the ministry of Jesus, teaching by teaching, story by story. On Sundays we also work steadily through a letter of the New Testament. The entire first half of our liturgical celebrations are thus grounded on the life of Christ and the teaching of the Apostles. The wisdom of having such fixed readings is this: we do not get to decide what we hear from God. We do not get to ignore some aspects of Jesus' ministry and concentrate our attention on others. We do not get to skip a letter that makes us uncomfortable. We are challenged and consoled, chastened and uplifted, by the entirety of the Gospel. In the weeks ahead, listen for what God is speaking to you. You may hear something new, something you would never have heard on your own.

Saturday, January 25

The Conversion of St. Paul

Those of us who were baptized as infants might yearn for a moment such as St. Paul's in which God becomes suddenly, dramatically, and unmistakably present. We should remember, however, that Paul's new faith came from somewhere. He knew what Christians believed. His familiarity with Christ was the basis for his conversion. Those of us who were raised with the knowledge of Christ may also have experienced moments of wonderful transcendence in our journey toward God, but those moments came from somewhere: they arose from our daily study, prayer, and effort to live more faithfully as God's children. *Today's Readings: Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22; Psalm 117:1bc, 2; Mark 16:15–18.*

Sunday, February 2

Presentation of the Lord

On the Feast of the Epiphany, we heard a story from Matthew's Gospel account in which Gentiles, represented by the Magi, followed a star's light to pay homage to the infant Jesus. The word *epiphany* comes from the Greek word meaning "to reveal." Luke's Gospel contains a different story of an epiphany. He tells how Simeon, guided by God's spirit, praises God for allowing him to see the Christ child, God's instrument of salvation. His famous prayer, the *Nunc Dimittis*, is part of the Church's Night Prayer.

The liturgy for this feast day includes a blessing of candles. Your parish may invite you to bring a candle to be blessed or to take one after Mass. Set this candle in a suitable place in your home. Take a moment to light the candle and pray each evening, repeating the words of Simeon and praising God for revealing his light and glory to you. *Today's Readings: Malachi 3:1–4; Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10; Hebrews 2:14–18; Luke 2:22–40.*

Monday, February 3

St. Blaise

In the Gospel reading for today, Jesus shows such power over evil that people are frightened of him. Our Lord shares this extraordinary power with his Church. As we celebrate the Optional Memorial of St. Blaise today, we celebrate the healing, protection, and peace that comes to us from God. If you do not know anything about St. Blaise, do a little research about him. Thank God for the many ways and the many people who reveal his saving love. *Today's Readings: 2 Samuel 15:13–14, 30; 16:5–13; Psalm 3:2–3, 4–5, 6–7; Mark 5:1–20.*

