



a Kendall Hunt Company

Baptism of Our Lord, Year C, Catechists - RCLB Lectionary



To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

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

Acts 10:34-38

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading which appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

The Word In Liturgy

Today's celebration marks the end of the Christmas season. Since the scene at the Jordan is presented as the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, today also serves as a "bridge" into Ordinary Time, which traces the historical unfolding of the ministry of Jesus through a continuous reading from the Gospel of Luke. Because we are still in the Christmas season, the theme of the Incarnation remains important in today's celebration. Even more prominent, and closely associated with last Sunday's celebration of the Epiphany, is the theme of the revelation of God's saving action in the person of Jesus. The gospel presents his baptism as the time when Jesus is revealed as God's Son, the beloved. But it is clear from all the readings selected for today that the Baptism of the Lord is also fundamental for our understanding of Christian baptism, the fulfillment of John's promise that "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

The text from Isaiah is one of the "Servant Songs," passages describing a chosen one who will deliver God's people from slavery by his suffering and death. Originally intended as a prophecy of consolation and hope for the Jewish people during the exile, these poems became messianic texts understood to speak metaphorically of the broader salvation that God would offer to the people in the midst of their moral slavery to sin. Christian tradition has found here allusions both to Jesus' ministry of reconciliation and to his redemptive suffering and death. This passage fits well with today's gospel, both because of its references to God's chosen servant, echoed in Luke's voice from heaven, and because its imagery is so strongly suggestive of the redemptive ministry of Jesus described throughout the gospels.



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Luke's description of the baptismal scene is striking in the way he underplays the actual——water event at the hand of John. Instead, he highlights the prayer of Jesus, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the heavenly voice proclaiming Jesus as God's beloved. These emphases are deliberate, revealing Jesus as a model for all believers.

Catholic Doctrine

"We acknowledge one baptism"

On this Sunday we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. It is fitting that we recall our own Christian baptism on this day as well. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John not because the Lord was sinful but because he wished to join himself to sinful humanity. It is also a sign of his self-emptying, ultimately achieved in his suffering and death on the cross. This gesture of self-emptying is made by Jesus and immediately afterwards all three synoptic accounts agree that the Spirit descended upon him. The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descends on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation and the Father reveals Jesus as his beloved Son.

Christian Baptism has two principal effects. One is purification from sin and the other is new birth in the Spirit.

By Baptism, all sins are forgiven. The original sin that taints this world and all our personal sins are destroyed by the waters of Baptism. The power of darkness is dispelled and for those reborn in this sacrament there is now nothing that would impede their entry into the kingdom of light. Thus baptism is described as the "door into life."

Baptism makes us a "new creation." (2 Cor. 5:17) We are incorporated into Christ and become adopted children of God. We are joined as brothers and sisters to one another in the household of the faithful. Members of the Body of Christ, we become members of one another. From the womb of the baptismal font is born the one people of God which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes. "The one spirit baptizes us into the one body." (1 Cor. 12:13)

Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs a community. The faith of the individual is supported and comes to maturity within the believing community, a community on a mission with Christ, "who was sent to bring to the poor the good news of salvation." (Preface for Baptism of the Lord, *Roman Missal*.) Born of the font, enlightened by Christ and growing in faith, believers walk as children of the light spreading the good news of salvation in their actions to assist the birth of the kingdom of God in this world.



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