



a Kendall Hunt Company

## **Baptism of the Lord, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary**



### **Catechist Background and Preparation**

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

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

Acts 10:34-38

Mark 1:7-11

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word that engages you?

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

### **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 this year traces the unfolding of the ministry of Jesus through a continuous reading from the Gospel of Mark. 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 beloved Son.

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. The gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus have found particular resonance in this servant song, which begins with God's designation of the servant as "my chosen one," the Greek word for which can also mean "son."

### **Catholic Doctrine**

#### **The Holy Spirit**

As depicted in the New Testament scripture for today's feast, the Spirit was powerfully manifested at the baptism of Jesus. At our own baptism, we profess our belief through the power of that very same Spirit. It is the third person of the Trinity, the Advocate and Guide,

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the Consoler and Paraclete who quickens faith within us (CCC 683).

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What do we believe about this vital Spirit that shapes our faith? Although there are references to the Spirit throughout Sacred Scripture, Catholic teaching on it developed in conjunction with the doctrine on the Trinity. This teaching took shape later in history, using both Old and New Testament sources. The Nicene Creed that we profess every Sunday lays out for us four essential points in the Catholic understanding of the Holy Spirit.

The first point concerns how the eternal Word of God was born into the world. We declare in the creed that in order to save us Jesus Christ came down from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit. What does this statement signify? Unique and singular, Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Fully divine and fully human in one person, Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. To effect this unique birth Mary was overshadowed by the Spirit of God. We believe that the Holy Spirit was sent to make holy the womb of Mary and to divinely fill it with life which caused her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own (CCC 485).

The second point concerns the status of the Spirit whom we call Lord and giver of life. We profess our belief that the Holy Spirit is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son. In other words, the Spirit is of the same substance and the same divine nature. That is why in the Creed we also go on to proclaim that the Spirit is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son. The affirmation that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son underlines their unity (CCC 247, 248). While a Trinity of three divine persons, there is only one God in whom we profess faith (CCC 235).

The third point concerns how the Spirit has been revealed prior to the advent of Jesus Christ in the world. God's work of salvation among us has been fully revealed in Jesus, but prior to his incarnation there was a long period of preparation for the Messiah. In creation itself, in the promise made to Abraham and his descendants, in various manifestations of God given to Moses, Joshua and the prophets, in the Law handed down on Sinai, and even in the Jewish exile an expectation was built up for the Messiah (CCC 703-710). Therefore, we are able as believers to search the Old Testament and discern the message contained therein that points the way to Christ—for the Holy Spirit has spoken through the prophets. By "prophets" we mean the entire Hebrew scriptures (CCC 702). For all time prior to Jesus is conceived by us Catholics to be a time of promise. But what about this current time, the age that has followed Jesus?

Both the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed place faith in the Holy Spirit together with faith in the Church. The fourth point therefore concerns the divine gift given to us through the agency of the Holy Spirit during this age of the last days. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles and the Church was born. The mission of Christ and the



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Spirit culminates in the Church that we believers describe as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, God's love is made visible in the world through the Church which announces, bears witness to, and makes present the bonds of communion between the divine and all believers (CCC 738). In these last days, we await the consummation of the kingdom, filled with the Spirit, the artisan of God's works (CCC 741).

