

The Baptism of the Lord

INTRODUCTION

Today we hear how Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. This was part of God's plan. The story reminds us of our own baptism, when God's spirit became a living spring in each one of us.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

As we light the candles today, we remember that at our baptism we were given the light of Christ, which burns in our hearts and lights up our lives each day.

SORRY

Lord, as we sing this song together, help us to feel truly sorry if we have not always been good.
Sing Sorry Song 2: *We come to say we are sorry.*

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 3:
Alleluia, Alleluia.

GOSPEL (cf Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus came from Galilee to the banks of the River Jordan to be baptised by John the Baptist. John was surprised by this and said to him, 'Surely this is wrong and it should be you baptising me!' Jesus answered, 'We will do things this way for it is right to follow my Father's plan.' Reluctantly John agreed, and Jesus was baptised in the river. As he stood up in the water, the clouds parted and the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove and settled on Jesus. Then a voice from Heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love very much.'

DISCUSSION

Where was Jesus baptised?

What sign appeared so that John and all the people knew that Jesus was the son of God?

Why did the people come to the river Jordan to be baptised? – Being baptised was a sign that they wanted to 'wash away their sins'. To start afresh and make a new beginning before the promised one came.

Why did Jesus come to be baptised when he was God's son and could not have sinned? – Jesus came to be baptised in order to receive the Holy Spirit for his work of teaching and healing, which was about to begin, and so that everyone would

know that he was the son of God. By his baptism, Jesus showed the people a way to begin afresh so that they could grow in goodness.

Jesus and many of the people baptised were grown-ups. When are we usually baptised?

Using a doll and suitable props such as a bowl of water, point out the most important features of a baptismal ceremony.

1. Promises are made on behalf of the child by the godparents to obey God's rules and to lead a Christian life.
2. Water is poured over the baby's head three times to represent the rebirth of the child by water and the Holy Spirit, and the washing away of the original sin of Adam and Eve.
3. The baby is anointed with holy oil called Chrism as a sign that God's spirit is making this person special – a member of God's family who shares his everlasting life.
4. The child is clothed in a white garment as a symbol of its purity as a child of God.
5. The godparents or parents, on behalf of the child, are given a lighted candle for they have received the light of Christ and the flame of faith burns in their heart.

Encourage the children to discuss any baptisms they have attended, and to share what they can remember about the occasion.

ACTIVITY

Make a copy of the illustration for each child. Colour the scene of Christ's baptism, and ask each child to colour a picture of their own baptism in the space provided.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Begin by making the sign of the cross. Each time we make the sign of the cross, it is a prayer without words.

Jesus,
accept our sign of the cross
as our prayer to you.
It reminds us that through our baptism
we belong to you,
and are children of God.
Let all who are baptised
walk together in the light of Christ.