

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God of heaven and earth,
when Jesus was baptized
in the River Jordan,
you sent the Holy Spirit
upon him to show the world
that he was your Son.
Send us the Holy Spirit also,
that we may be the messengers
of your Good News.
We ask you this
through Christ our Lord.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The first reading describes the mission of the servant who is chosen by God to bring justice and truth to the world and to make God known to the people. At his baptism Jesus is revealed as the Son of God and is anointed with the Spirit. Coupled with our first reading, the Baptism of the Lord also reveals Jesus as the servant described by Isaiah. He is anointed for mission. His mission is to bring justice, to be a light to the nations, to be a healer and a liberator. In this liturgy, the church holds before us the power and the challenge of our own baptism: we are children of God, anointed with the Spirit, and the mission of Jesus is *our* mission.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

In reflecting on the baptism of the Lord with children, we encounter a particular difficulty. The baptism of Jesus was like most experiences in the early church—an adult experience. While the essential truth of gratuitous grace was certainly recognized, baptism was intimately linked with conversion and a life of service.

FIRST READING: *Isaiah 42:1, 6-7*

This is a reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Our God says,

“This is my servant, my chosen one.
I give him my strength and my spirit
to bring justice to all the people.
And I say to him,

‘I, your God, have called you.
I have taken you by your hand.
I have sent you as my covenant to the people,
as a light for the world.
I have sent you
to open the eyes of the blind,
to free those in prison,
and to give light to those who live in darkness.’ ”

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 146*

RESPONSE:

I praise you, O God, for your faith - ful love, I

praise you, O God, for all that you do.

VERSES: [repeat by singing or clapping rhythm] to Response

1. You free the op-pressed and save the poor.
2. The hun - gry are fed, the blind can see.
3. † Hap - py are all who hope in you.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: *Matthew 3:13-17*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus came to John the Baptist
to be baptized in the Jordan River.
But John said to him,

“No, I should be baptized by you.”

Jesus answered,

“But we must do it this way because this is
what God wants us to do.”

So John baptized Jesus.

And when Jesus came up out of the water,
he saw the Spirit of God
coming to him in the form of a dove.
Then a voice from heaven said,

“This is my beloved Son
with whom I am very pleased.”

This is the Good News of the Lord.

The baptism of Jesus is the inauguration of his public life, a life of service. Our baptism, like that of Jesus, calls us to the service described in our reading from *Isaiah*. This connection is more difficult to see and reflect on in light of infant baptism, which is the case of most of the children with whom we are ministering. And so, we hope in this reflection to plant a seed of this truth which the children will gradually come to understand and live more fully.

After the Gospel, ask the children what they heard. After they have given their reflections, help them to recall especially “water,” “Spirit,” “You are my Son.” Ask them if they have been present for a baptism or if their parents have told them about their own baptism. Help them to recall what happens at a Christian baptism. Draw from them comments about the following:

- Water.
- Spirit (“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”).
- We receive the Holy Spirit at our baptism, as Jesus did.
- We are sons and daughters of God.

Ask the children to recall what the first reading was about. You may want to read it again. How is this reading like the Gospel story on the baptism of Jesus:

- “Spirit.”
- “With whom I am well pleased.”

What did God ask the servant to do?
(Bring justice, heal people, free people.)
Did Jesus do these things after his baptism?
Can you recall any stories about that?

God said to the servant: “I have sent you as a light to the people.”

Remind the children that we receive a lighted candle when we are baptized. Because we are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, we are like Jesus. We can be a light for other people. We are like Jesus; we can serve other people.

- How can we be a light for people in our homes, classrooms, neighborhoods?
- How can we help people, as Jesus did, in our homes, classrooms, neighborhoods? (As always, it is important that this reflect their age.)

Conclude by asking the children to ask their parents to share with them pictures and memories of their baptism.

