

12 Jan 25- The Baptism of the Lord – 1st Sunday (Year C)

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Theme: Jesus brings justice and divine life to the nations. As his baptised family, we seek the kingdom of God through justice and peace.

(1) Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

A chosen servant of God will courageously help others to find salvation

Thus says the Lord:

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed

until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.”

Responsorial: Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-30

R./: Oh, bless the Lord, my soul

Lord God, how great you are,
clothed in majesty and glory,
wrapped in light as in a robe!
You stretch out the heavens like a tent. (R./)

Above the rains you build your dwelling.
You make the clouds your chariot,
you walk on the wings of the wind,
you make the winds your messengers
and flashing fire your servants. (R./)

How many are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your riches.
There is the sea, vast and wide,
with its moving swarms past counting,
living things great and small. (R./)

All of these look to you
to give them their food in due season.
You give it, they gather it up:
you open your hand, they have their fill. (R./)

You take back your spirit, they die,
returning to the dust from which they came.
You send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the earth. (R./)

(2) Acts 10:34-38

At his baptism in the Jordan Jesus went about doing good for God was with him

Peter said to Cornelius and his household: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

At his baptism Jesus' mission was revealed: to share the Spirit of

God with us

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he consented.

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom am well pleased.”



Or, ad libitum for Year C:

(1) Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

He will feed his flock like a shepherd

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

(2) Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Purified through the water of rebirth and renewal

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water

of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The Baptist points to Jesus the Saviour, whom God calls “my Son, the Beloved”

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”



Having a clear intent and purpose

During a pilgrimage to the Holy Land I and some friends stood up to our knees in the river Jordan, to renew the promises of our baptism. It was a moving experience as we remembered the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus just after HIS baptism. By being baptised into him we are counted as members of God's beloved family. United with Jesus, we are made like him, God's own daughters and sons. Others who stood that day in the Jordan will remember that moment today and use it to renew their commitment to Jesus. But all of us were baptised somewhere, sometime, and we can claim that baptism fully as our own.

Our Lord's baptism is a vital moment in our story of salvation, where he joined with humanity in the humble outreach to God, and where the Father and the Spirit are seen and heard to be there with him. Our gospel says that "the heavens were opened," a powerful statement of the point of contact between heaven and earth. Later on, as Jesus completes his life-journey on Calvary, we read how "the veil of the Temple was rent in two," a symbol that we are not completely free to enter the Holy of Holies. Today's gospel has Jesus beginning a journey which each of us is asked to travel. It is a journey full of purpose, a journey of intent. We need a sense of purpose and pattern to our living. St Peter summarised the purpose and pattern of Christ's life when he said, "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." We are each invited, personally, to make this purpose our own.

A little story about finding direction: A Dubliner was down the country travelling along by-roads where the signposts were few and far between. After a while, unsure of his directions, he decided to ask the first person he saw. When he came across a farmer driving his cows home for milking he stopped the car and asked if

he was on the right road to Mallow. The farmer told him that he certainly was on the Mallow road. The driver thanked him and was about to move forward when the farmer added, in a nonchalant way, “You’re on the right road, but you’re going in the wrong direction!’ Let’s look into our own lifestyle today, to see if our direction is right.

Embracing Baptism

Baptism is such a happy occasion when a child’s birth is publicly celebrated and cheered, and here they are received into a larger family, the family of the church. In being received into our church-family, these children become our brothers and sisters in the Lord, sons and daughters of God, and temples of the Spirit. The joy of faith and hope is palpable, especially when the parents and godparents come up to the baptismal font and the water is poured over the head of the child by the celebrant. Each child is anointed before and after baptism with special *oil of catechumens* and the *oil of chrism*; the baptismal shawl is placed around the child and the baptismal candle is lit. The whole occasion is uplifting in a way that is unique to that sacrament.

Of course, the majority of baptisms are of children, who are oblivious to what is happening around them. A big decision is being made on their behalf without their knowing anything about it. Yet, just as parents make all kinds of other big decisions for their children without consulting them, so they happily make this significant decision on their behalf. There is a story in the gospels of parents bringing little children to Jesus. When the disciples

tried to stop parents doing this, Jesus rebuked his disciples and said to them, 'let the children come to me and do not stop them, for to such as these the kingdom of God belongs.' Parents continue to bring their children to Jesus today whenever they present them for baptism, because in baptism they are being baptized into the person of Christ; they become members of his body; Jesus begins to live within them through the Spirit. When parents bring their children for baptism they are making a decision for them that is very much in keeping with the Lord's desire. 'Let the children come to me and do not stop them.'

Today we celebrate the feast of the baptism of Jesus. It is a good day to reflect on our own baptism and its significance for us. The day of Jesus' baptism was a watershed in his life; it was a day of new beginning. On that day he began his public ministry during which he gave himself fully in the service of God and all of God's people. On that day Jesus launched forth as the one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. As he set out on that momentous journey for all of us, he was assured of God his Father's favour, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you', and he was empowered by the Holy Spirit, who descended upon him like a dove.

Though Jesus was baptised as an adult and we were baptised as children, our baptism was also a day of new beginning for us. On that day we were launched on the great adventure of becoming disciples of Jesus in our own time. On that day, we too were given an assurance of God's love and favour, and we too were empowered by the Holy Spirit for the journey ahead of us. On that day we were caught up into Jesus' own very special relationship with God and we became a member of Jesus' family of disciples, the church. It is a moment of grace that has the potential to

shape our lives in a very fundamental way, in a way that is in keeping with God's purpose for our lives.

Baptism is the beginning of a lifelong call. We spend the rest of our lives trying to carry out what it calls us to be. We were baptized as children but years later we personally confirmed the implications of our baptism. It is as adults that we say personal 'yes' to the Lord who has blessed us from the start. It may be as late as our twenties or even later that we adopt that 'yes' with all our heart and soul and mind. In those mature years we can more fully hear the call of today's Reading from Isaiah , 'Come to the water all you who are thirsty; Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near.' From the moment of our baptism the Lord keeps guiding to us, and as the Scripture declares, that word "does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do." Like Jesus himself, today we turn to God again to embrace our personal baptism.