

First Reading

Isaiah 55:1-11 (The first reading from Cycle A, Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7, may also be chosen.)
Isaiah calls upon the people to return to the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Isaiah 12:2-3,4-6 (The psalm from Cycle A, Psalm 29:1-4,9-10, may also be chosen.)
A prayer of praise for God's salvation.

Second Reading

1 John 5:1-9 (The second reading from Cycle A, Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38, may also be chosen.)
The Spirit of Truth testifies on behalf of Jesus, God's Son.

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:7-11
Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In most years, this feast is celebrated on the Sunday after Epiphany. When Epiphany falls on either January 7 or 8, the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the Monday after Epiphany. In today's Gospel we hear John the Baptist contrast his baptism of repentance with the baptism that Jesus will inaugurate. John the Baptist says that he has baptized with water, but that the one who is to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was not yet a Christian baptism; it was a preparation for the Christian Baptism we celebrate today, and through which sins are forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit is received. In accepting John's baptism, Jesus, though sinless, united himself with all sinners.

The baptism of Jesus is reported in each of the three Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Clearly, Jesus' baptism was an event of great significance for Jesus and for the early Christian community. Mark and Luke report the story from Jesus' perspective; the voice from heaven is addressed to Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel, the voice from heaven speaks to all who are present. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism shows that something new is beginning through the baptism and ministry of Jesus.

The baptism of Jesus is considered an important manifestation of God in the person of Jesus, another epiphany. Jesus' baptism inaugurates his mission. Mark's Gospel moves quickly from the report of Jesus' baptism to Jesus' temptations in the desert to his ministry in Galilee after John's arrest. The end of the ministry of John the Baptist is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In an analogous way, our Baptism inaugurates our mission as Christians.

Surprisingly, on this the last day of the Christmas season the Gospel does not tell a story from Jesus' childhood. Instead the Gospel reveals Jesus' relationship to God: the Son of Mary and Joseph is also God's own Son. We believe that through Baptism we are also made children of God.

Family Connection

In the story of Jesus' baptism, we hear the report of a significant moment in Jesus' life. By accepting baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus shows himself to accept solidarity with sinners. In the voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we know that God received this offering from Jesus and found it pleasing. In the passages that follow in Mark's Gospel, we learn that Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of his public ministry.

Although many of us may have already taken down our Christmas decorations, liturgically speaking, the Christmas season hasn't ended yet; today is the last day. Holidays like Christmas are highlights of our year, moments of great grace. This grace renews us and prepares us for our return to the season of Ordinary Time, to the continuing work of discipleship.

Gather as a family and discuss your feelings about the ending of the Christmas season. How does it feel to take down the Christmas decorations? Many of us experience a letdown after the excitement of Christmas; others may feel relieved that life is returning to normal. Liturgically, we end the Christmas season today by reflecting on the importance of Jesus' baptism. Read together today's Gospel, Mark 1:7-11. Jesus' baptism prepared him for his public ministry. What will we take from this Christmas season to carry us forward into Ordinary Time, to renew and strengthen our life of Christian discipleship? Conclude by praying together today's psalm response taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 12:2-6, or

Pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

You can watch a video adaptation of Mark 1:1-11 by clicking on the link below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNbwrHp_7Ys