

Liturgy of the Word with Children
The Baptism of the Lord, Year C
12 January, 2025
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Catechist Background

Around the time of Christ other charismatic religious leaders had arisen who were falsely claiming to be the Messiah who would free the Jews from the Romans who ruled them at that time. As a result many Jews expected or hoped that the Messiah would be coming soon. Some thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah but he was quick to point out that he (John) was not. Instead, John taught them that someone would come after him who would be the one they were looking and hoping for.

John was not the first prophet to teach the Jews to turn back to God and to live righteously: Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Hosea amongst others had also done so. John taught that baptism was a way to repent and to begin your new life with God. With infant baptism being the usual experience in the Church today, we sometimes find it difficult to link baptism with a conversion that leads us into a life of service. One of two possible First Readings at Mass today reminds us that we are called to 'open the eyes of the blind, free those in prison, and give light to those who live in darkness.'

The liturgical colour for today is white. In church liturgical understanding, white means "Jesus is here", and so that is the colour for today, and it is also the colour for baptism. We wrap a newly baptised person in white to show that they, as a consequence of their baptism, are now wrapped up in the love of Jesus. (That is also why the altar linens we use in Mass are white, why children making their First Holy Communion wear white, why a couple on their wedding day might both wear white, and why deacons, priests and bishops wear a white garment (an alb) under their vestments.)

Setting the Scene

Set up some symbols of baptism (water, white cloth, candle, oil) as part of a focal point.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are mighty God and Prince of Peace, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You are Son of God and Son of Mary, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You came to gather us all together, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

We Pray (1)

Lord, help us to live as you would, so that your love shines in all dark places in our world. Amen.

Gospel Introduction

Tell the children who John the Baptist was and that he was part of Jesus' larger family. If some of them are unfamiliar with baptism, explain baptism very briefly using the items you've prepared.

Gospel Acclamation

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

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Why was John baptising people?
 - Try to draw out answers that emphasise the fact that John was trying to get others to lead better lives and to get ready to meet God's special chosen person: Jesus.

- What does it feel like when you have been very messy - maybe with paints, dirt or food - and then have a bath?
 - This clean feeling mirrors what goes on inside a person's soul in baptism.
- Perhaps some of the children can remember their own baptism, or the baptism of a brother or sister or someone else;
 - invite them to share their experiences of baptism;
 - point out the different symbols that we use in baptism;
- When Jesus was baptised, a voice from heaven – God's voice - said 'You are my beloved Son, with whom I am very pleased.'
 - How does it feel when somebody tells you they are pleased with you?
 - How would you feel if you heard God say that you were God's beloved child and that God was very pleased with you?
 - What kind of things can we do that make God happy?

Response

We are invited to follow in Jesus' footsteps and bring his love to the world around us. We are also God's children, and when we live like Jesus, God is pleased with us.

- Give each child a piece of paper that represents water (perhaps with wavy lines on it or light blue paper cut in a flowing shape);
- Ask each child write or draw something they do that makes God happy;
- When they are finished, invite the children to come up one by one and put their paper at the centrepiece, saying what they have written or drawn on it;
- The leader can then respond, 'I am very pleased with you.'

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children, by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do!'

- Do you believe in God, the loving Father who sent his Son to us?
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, came to lead the way for us to live?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to follow in Jesus' footsteps?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying 'Jesus came to lead the way to the Father, and we trust his goodness as we pray...'

Leader: We pray that the Church may act in a way that brings people to God. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray that our leaders that will be good examples of how to live. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for all people in the world who are hurting in any way. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for us and for our families. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to live out our baptism, by always choosing to be kind, honest and loving. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**