

Christmas: Baptism of the Lord

Lesson Contents

Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- Today's reading is the first of the four "suffering servant songs" from Isaiah.
- These songs depict a chosen servant who must suffer much because of faithfulness to God.
- The suffering servant songs have been linked to Jesus Christ.

Second Reading

- In Acts, Peter makes the point that the revelation of God's love began at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River.
- In Jesus, God's reign has been established on earth.
- God wants the entire world to hear the good news of salvation.

Gospel

- In all the Gospels Jesus is publicly proclaimed God's Son at his Baptism.
- The details of Jesus' Baptism in today's Gospel echo the images from the four servant songs.
- At the moment of his Baptism, Jesus begins his lifework of proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Baptism of the Lord

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7—I have called you for the victory of justice.

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6—The Lord saves.

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-38—He went about doing good works.

Gospel: Mark 1:7-11—On you my favor rests.

Invitation to prayer (30 seconds)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Have them take three deep breaths while you prompt them to relax as they breathe in God, our Father who loves us, Jesus Christ, his Son, our brother, and God's Holy Spirit who lovingly guides us. As an invitation to prayer, make the Sign of the Cross.

Listening for a word or phrase to speak to your heart (3-4 minutes)

Ages 5-6: Tell the story of Jesus' Baptism in your own words or read it aloud from a children's Bible. Ask children to think about the people who love them. Have them reflect on the words, "I love you."

Ages 7-8: Read the words of the Baptismal Rite and ask children to think about God's love for each of them. In your own words tell them the story of Jesus' Baptism (Mark 1:7-11) or read it aloud from a children's Bible.

Ages 9-14: Read the Gospel passage slowly and deliberately while the children and young people are silently listening. Ask them to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they pick out their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

Loving God through his Word (3-5 minutes)

Ages 5-6: Have children draw a heart and reflect on what that heart symbolizes. Read aloud the prompts on the handout as a conversation starter.

Ages 7-8: Focus children's conversation on three pictures with words on the reflection sheet that are elements used at Baptism. Have children color the picture and help them name each item. (baptismal fount, holy water, oil, Paschal Candle, stole).

Ages 9-11: Guide young people in a meditation on the Gospel. Have them imagine that they are Jesus. Have them consider his feelings and thoughts. Use the text on the handout as a guide. Have young people share their responses to this question: *What will you do this week to live as a loved and special son or daughter of God?*

Ages 12-14: Use the text on the handout to help young people imagine they are a part of the crowd when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, and reflect on their own Baptism. Discuss their responses to this final question: *What do you do to show others that you are a beloved child of God?*

Living the Gospel words through the week (3-5 minutes)

The handouts describe one or two ways children and young people can live this reflection on the Gospel through the week at home, school, or play. If appropriate, have them add one or two more personal choices to act on this week.