

Christmas:

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

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Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- A chosen servant is singled out in Isaiah's so-called Servant Song.
- God's presence is again associated with light. God's servant is a light to the nations.
- The first reading describes the messiah as God's servant; God's chosen one, who will bring forth justice to all the earth.

Second Reading

- The basis for Peter's speech comes from the Old Testament: "God shows no partiality" (Deut 10:17).
- Luke applies this statement to God's accepting not only Jews but also Gentiles who act rightly.
- Today's second reading summarizes Christian preaching about Christ to Gentiles.

Gospel

- In the Gospel, Jesus went to John to be baptized in the River Jordan.
- Jesus' baptism is a prophetic action, a sign for us that God's Kingdom is in our midst.
- Participating in the rituals of his time, Jesus received through the tradition, a confirmation of his calling as God's Chosen One.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7—The Lord is pleased with his chosen one.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3b+9b-10—The Lord blesses his people and gives them peace.

Second Reading: Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38—Peter at Cornelius' home.

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17—The Baptism of Jesus by John.

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.

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

Ages 5-6: Help the children sound out the words on the sheet. Read the story of Jesus' Baptism from a children's Lectionary or tell it in your own words.

Ages 7-8: Read aloud the Gospel reading from the handout.

Ages 9-11 and Ages 12-14: Read the Gospel passage. Ask young people to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they choose a word or phrase. 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 Talk about concrete things children might do to please God. Ask for their suggestions. Have them complete their drawing and share it with the group. Pray the closing prayer.

Ages 7-8 Talk about concrete things children do to please God and others. Explore their feelings of being affirmed. Use the text on the handout to continue a conversation with them. Pray the closing prayer.

Ages 9-11 Have young people share their word or phrase. Brainstorm which actions or words people use to let them know they are pleased with them and vice versa. Apply their responses to the conversation starters on the handout. Select a volunteer to read the text aloud. Pray the closing prayer.

Ages 12-14 Have young people share their word or phrase. Use the questions on the handout as conversation starters for the large group. Pray the closing prayer.

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.