

Feast of Faith

The Sign of the Cross

At the beginning of our prayer, we make the sign of the cross together. This sign, simple and powerful, operates on many levels. We trace the sign of the cross over our bodies, reminding ourselves that the cross of Christ has become our source of resurrection, life, and grace. With this sign, we also profess our faith in the Trinity: the presider does not say “in the names,” but “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”—three persons, one God. The sign of the cross is also a baptismal reminder, for every sign of the cross echoes the words spoken over us at our baptism, which marked our entry into the saving mystery of Christ. This many-layered sign is also our primary sign of blessing: the cross is traced over people, places, and things upon which we ask God to impart divine benediction.

In blessing ourselves with the sign of the cross at the beginning of Mass, we acknowledge the mystery that has gathered us together: that Christ, the crucified and risen One, is living, and that we are members of his Body. Our response, our Amen, is our yes to all this, our first profession of faith.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Rehearsal

Psalms are sung in the home and rehearsed in the streets.

—St. Ambrose

The Waters of Baptism

When new sod is put in, it needs constant saturation with water. Landscapers say that this “knits” the sod to the soil. The same when a branch is grafted onto a tree: the poultice that joins them at the splice must be kept wet at all times. Water is the stuff that binds the very cells of our bodies together. No wonder religions throughout all times and cultures have used it so prominently. When Jesus stepped into the Jordan for baptism, he “knit” himself to what had come before him. By going to the Jordan, he made himself one with the people of Israel who had crossed it into their Promised Land. With John the Baptist, Christ wove himself into the prophetic tradition that heralded the coming reign of God. He had become fully human in the waters of Mary’s womb, and by partaking in the rite of the baptism of repentance, Jesus identified himself with our sinful, frail humanity. It is through the waters of baptism that Christ continues to graft new members onto his Body, the Church; through these waters we are cleansed from sin and filled with the promise of grace, given our destiny for eternal life. For us, as for Jesus, it is also the waters of baptism that inaugurate our mission to proclaim the Good News.

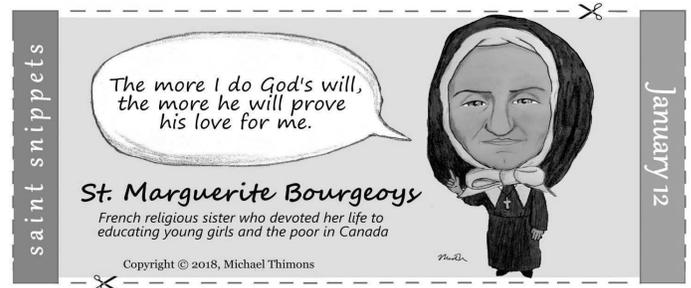
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Heb 1:1-6; Ps 97:1, 2b, 6, 7c, 9; Mk 1:14-20
Tuesday:	Heb 2:5-12; Ps 8:2ab, 5, 6-9; Mk 1:21-28
Wednesday:	Heb 2:14-18; Ps 105:1-4, 6-9; Mk 1:29-39
Thursday:	Heb 3:7-14; Ps 95:6-11; Mk 1:40-45
Friday:	Heb 4:1-5, 11; Ps 78:3, 4bc, 6c-8; Mk 2:1-12
Saturday:	Heb 4:12-16; Ps 19:8-10, 15; Mk 2:13-17
Sunday:	1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19; Ps 40:2, 4, 7-10; 1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20; Jn 1:35-42

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	The Baptism of the Lord
Monday:	First Week in Ordinary Time begins
Wednesday:	St. Hilary
Saturday:	Blessed Virgin Mary



An Ancient Baptistery

One of the most ancient and enduring sites for baptism in Rome is the church of San Giovanni in Fonte. This church is in fact a baptistery, and houses the font for the Lateran Basilica, the cathedral of Rome. The Emperor Constantine sponsored its construction in the year 315, and it is therefore the oldest baptistery in the world. It is the model for nearly all later baptisteries, including perhaps the font in your own parish church.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Today's Readings

First Reading — Behold my servant with whom I am pleased; he shall bring forth justice to the nations (Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7) or Isaiah 55:1-11.

Psalms — The Lord will bless his people with peace (Psalm 29) or Isaiah 12:2-6.

Second Reading — God anointed him with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:34-38) or 1 John 5:1-9.

Gospel — You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased (Mark 1:7-11).

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The Baptism of the Lord January 10, 2021

All you who are thirsty, come to the water!
—Isaiah 55:1

PRAYER TO OUR LADY, HEALTH OF THE SICK DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

O Mary,

You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.

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We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the Cross,
united with Jesus' pain,
keeping your faith firm.



You, Salvation of the Roman people,
know what we need,
and we trust that you will provide for those needs so that,
as at Cana of Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.
He who took our suffering upon Himself,
and burdened Himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the Cross,
to the joy of Resurrection. Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.
Do not despise our pleas — we who are put to the test —
and deliver us from every danger. O glorious and blessed Virgin.

—Pope Francis, March 11, 2020
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Treasures From Our Tradition

Valentine's cards have appeared at the shopping mall, but in the Church it is still Christmas. Today's feast spun off from Epiphany. Originally, a blessing of holy water was an important feature of the Epiphany feast, and in the Greek Church, this was a day for leaping into the sea in grateful recollection of baptism. The gratitude may not be quite as profound among the Orthodox Christians who have to chop holes in the ice to plunge into the waters!

Still, there are few better days to celebrate a baptism, and to plunge our hands into the waters of the font. Jesus found the waters of the Jordan irresistible because of what had been done in those waters: people had confessed their sins, and had acknowledged their need to be forgiven and healed. Today, we are the people in the water, and Christ comes to be with us. You won't have to chop a hole in the ice to celebrate your baptism. A beautiful bowl of water on the table tonight, a toast with sparkling water at dinner, or even a leap into the shower with a sign of the cross and a prayer of thanksgiving will suffice!

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

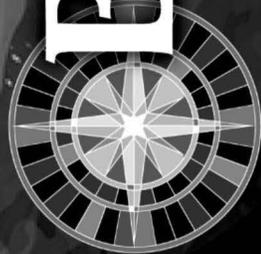
JOHN THE BAPTIST PROCLAIMED:
"ONE MIGHTIER THAN I
IS COMING AFTER ME ...

I HAVE BAPTIZED YOU WITH WATER;
HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU
WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT."

MARK 1:7,8

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THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD



JANUARY 10, 2021

WATER

It may seem obvious that the theme for the Baptism of the Lord is "water," but when one spends time with the readings today, one can see many different connotations for that water and its power. Isaiah calls the poor who are thirsty and tired to come to the water and take the spiritual food and drink that will be provided if we but seek the Lord. Here, God is both destination and consolation. The responsorial psalm follows suit with the image of drawing water from the springs of salvation. 1 John takes us to the reality of Christ as eucharist: not only Jesus' birth and baptism, but his death, as we hear that Jesus came "by water and by blood." The Gospel depicts John baptizing Jesus with water, and the Spirit baptizing Jesus. We experience both the humanity and the divinity of Christ. Indeed, water has much power to save us.

BEING THE MESSENGER

When we go to a pop music concert, there is often an opening act. Usually they are a young group on their way up, or older musicians who are past their prime and still hanging on in the business. This is indeed a hard job. In the comedy world it is the same thing. You have to warm up the crowd. You are not who they are coming to see, and audiences may be unresponsive, come in late, or not pay a lot of attention. Yet John had no problem being the opening act, the messenger, the harbinger of faith for Jesus. He was very devout in his faith and knew what his role was. Many Jews were actively seeking a messiah, and he was quick to let them know that he was not the one for whom they were waiting. "I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Yet he conducted his ministry with faith and hope.

BEING THE MESSAGE

As John humbly carried out his mission and Jesus accepted this simple baptism by John, the Holy Spirit indeed came down upon Jesus, and God proclaimed for the first time, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Thus Jesus began his formal ministry. There must have been much that he already knew, but also much that he uncovered each day in his encounters with the disciples and the crowds. As he responded "yes" to the Father over and over, his thirst was quenched and his spirit strengthened.

How many times do we witness baptisms in the parish? The priest ministers with simple elements of water and oil, but the Spirit is called down each time. Every time we participate, we are experiencing the message, experiencing the call again. How many times have we blessed ourselves with holy water, or participated in a sprinkling rite? Yet in these days, when church fountains are empty due to safety precautions, we need to remember those other times, trust in God, and sing the prayer of Isaiah in our hearts about drawing the water joyfully. We must trust in the message. We must become the message of God's saving action through our baptism and our lives.

TODAY'S READINGS

Isaiah 55:1-11
Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6
1 John 5:1-9
Mark 1:7-11

Prayer of the Faithful

We have been baptized in water and the Spirit. As sons and daughters of God, then, let us bring to God our prayers for the needs of the world.

For God's holy Church, carrying forth the word from God's mouth and commissioned to see people of every nation and baptize them in the name of the Trinity, let us pray to the Lord.

For nations to share their life-giving water supplies with all who need them, rather than hoarding them or fighting over them, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who work with adults and children preparing for baptism, and for those who minister to parents preparing for the baptism of their infants, let us pray to the Lord.

For students resuming their studies after the Christmas holidays, whether at home or on campus, that they may pursue their studies with renewed energy, let us pray to the Lord.

For all who have been baptized in the past year, that they may continue to grow in faith and in the grace of their baptism, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are sick, for all who suffer from COVID-19, and for all who have died, especially N., N., and N., let us pray to the Lord.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

**Heavenly God,
you call us to your service
through our baptism.
Hear these the prayers we make
on behalf of those in need,
and grant them through your Son,
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.**

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