

BAPTISM OF THE LORD



A Word to Embrace

O Word of God,
sent forth from the mouth of the Father,
baptized by John in the Jordan River,
consecrated by the Holy Spirit,
and proclaimed beloved Son,
be for us God's Word
of wisdom and salvation.
Like God's words through his prophets,
sent to shower earth and hearts
and make them fruitful,
come into our hearts!
Drench us with understanding
of your ways.
and let your will for us be done.
We ask this through the same Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the
unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, January 11, 2015
Pondering the Word of God



Today's Readings: Isaiah 55:1–11; Psalm: Isaiah 12:2–3, 4bcd, 5–6; 1 John 5:1–9; Mark 1:7–11. Unlike the evangelists Matthew and Luke, Mark does not provide an account of the events surrounding Jesus's birth. We do not find angels, shepherds, wise men, or a manger in Mark. The evangelist introduces his account of the Gospel with the prophecy from Isaiah, John's proclamation of a baptism of repentance, and the baptism of the Lord. With the baptism by John, Jesus begins the life that will lead to the Cross.

In a few months, we will hear today's First Reading during the Easter Vigil. With candidates for the initiation sacraments in our midst, the relation of the text to Baptism will be evident. Today, we might look at the reading's last verse: "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; / it shall

not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which purpose, / and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Christ, the Word that the Father sent, is beginning his ministry. He will accomplish salvation, thus succeeding in the reason he was sent.

In the Second Reading, Peter explains that salvation is for all who fear the Lord and do what is right. Peter notes Jesus's anointing by the Spirit, the good that Jesus did, and the message of peace. In succeeding paragraphs, Peter asserts that the resurrected Jesus appeared to the chosen, who were to preach him to all. On this last day of Christmas Time, we might consider how we stand in awe of God and how we preach the message of peace through Jesus Christ. Would others desire to come to the water because of the way we live?



THE WEEK AT HOME AND BEYOND; ORDINARY TIME, WINTER: SPECIAL DAYS

Monday, January 12, 2015

Counted Time

Today we return to Ordinary Time, derived from *ordinal*, meaning counted time. We move from Sunday to Sunday, counting them as we go. Yet there is nothing ordinary about Ordinary Time. Each Sunday we celebrate *Dies Domini*, the Day of the Lord. In July 1998, Saint John Paul II issued an apostolic letter on the Lord's Day. We may want to pledge to take on our lips the words from Psalm 118:24, "This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad," as we begin each Sunday during this new year.

January 18–25, 2015

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

On January 25, 1958, St. John XXIII announced there was to be a convening of a major ecumenical council in the Church. One of the greatest fruits of the Second Vatican Council has been the strengthening of the unity among the Christian ecclesial communities. As we observe the fifty-plus anniversaries of the Council documents, consider reading the *Decree on Ecumenism*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and continue to pray that "all will be made one."

Thursday, January 22, 2015

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

The Roman Missal includes a day of prayer and penance for abortion. Today we give thanks to God for the gift of human life and recall that the Church upholds the dignity of each person from conception through natural death. If you have been setting aside change in a baby bottle, as suggested on December 6, take this money to an agency that advocates on behalf of the unborn. Today's Readings: Hebrews 7:25—8:6; Psalm 40:7–8a, 8b–9, 10, 17; Mark 3:7–12.

Monday, February 2, 2015

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Today candles are blessed and the theme of light is evident throughout the Gospel reading. We hear Simeon, who has awaited the Messiah, proclaim that Jesus will be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles." Though this feast takes place forty days after Christmas, the imagery makes it seem as though we are in the midst of Christmas Time. Since the eighth century, the blessing and distribution of candles have been part of this celebration, giving the feast its popular name, Candlemas. Today's Readings: Malachi 3:1–4; Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10; Hebrews 2:14–18; Luke 2:22–40.

Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Optional Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes—World Day of the Sick

Today we remember all who are sick and suffering. Keep the sick in your prayers today, and perhaps you can find ways to care for the sick and the homebound in your community. Do you know someone suffering from a chronic disease? Would the caregiver enjoy a break while you stay with the individual? Or perhaps you could bring a meal to a family who cares for a family member who is ill. Today's Readings: Isaiah 66:10–14c; Psalm: Judith 13:18bcde, 19; John 2:1–11.

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

Mardi Gras

Known as Carnival or Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday is celebrated with parades and feasting, dance and music and colorful masks. Tradition calls for serving pancakes at a meal. This is the day the Church burns last year's palms for Ash Wednesday. Approaching Lent, we consider the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that we will embrace this year. It is important today to carefully consider the practices that we take up during Lent. Those practices should make a difference with relationships with God and others. Today's Readings: Genesis 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10; Psalm 29:1a and 2, 3ac–4, 3b and 9c–10; Mark 8:14–21.

