

## The Baptism of Christ

*First Sunday of Epiphany • Sunday between 7 and 13 January inclusive*

### Principal Service readings

Isaiah 42.1-9	First song of the servant
Psalms 29	Hymn to the Lord of the storm
Acts 10.34-43	Peter's address in the house of Cornelius
Matthew 3.13-17	Jesus is baptized by John

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Jesus is baptized by John*

<sup>13</sup>Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. <sup>16</sup>And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Matthew 3.13-17 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

### Comments and Questions

Epiphany continues the Christmas theme of the manifestation of God through his Son, Jesus Christ. The entire life of Christ is viewed as repeated manifestations of God, and so this feast, the Baptism of the Lord, follows on from the Epiphany, his nativity.

<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

John is seen as an important figure, with a prophetic ministry. He shows his humility before Jesus by questioning why Jesus should come to him to be baptized (3.14). Jesus, though, wants to be baptized by John 'to fulfil all righteousness' (1.15). What does he mean by this? He is already righteous. Perhaps he wanted to show his own humility. Perhaps he was identifying with the ordinary people who were coming to John to be baptized – so, a sense of solidarity with others. Also, by doing this Jesus was in some ways authenticating the ministry of John.

The dove is an unusual symbol for the Spirit, but perhaps something more is needed than 'the breath of God' (Genesis 1.2).

In Mark's version the voice from heaven speaks directly, as if this is commissioning from God. In Matthew's account, though, the voice appears to be for Jesus himself, or perhaps for the church.

Baptism is a public event, and, for Jesus, it becomes a commissioning service.

## Quotations

### 1

The story of Jesus' baptism in Matthew's Gospel. Therefore, is both a further challenge to Herod – here is God anointing his true king under the nose of the old one, somewhat like Samuel anointing David with Saul still on the throne – and the beginning of the confrontation with, as well as the welcome for, the whole world.

*Twelve months of Sundays : reflections on Bible readings, Year A / N. T. Wright. 2001*

### 2

Above all, in being baptized by John, Jesus came, in the humility of his human condition, to the encounter that God had ordered for him on the banks of the Jordan, where the voice of the last prophet reverberates with the promise that will be accomplished without delay.

*Days of the Lord ; the liturgical year. Vol. 1 · Baptism of the Lord, Year A. 1991*

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Baptism of Christ; soteriology/salvation; manifestation; baptism; conversion; paschal mystery

## Closing Prayer

God of the covenant,  
you anointed your beloved Son  
with the power of the Holy Spirit,  
to be light for the nations  
and release for captives.

Grant that we who are born again  
of water and the Spirit  
may proclaim with our lips the good news of his peace  
and show forth in our lives the victory of his justice.

We make our prayer through Jesus Christ,  
your Word made flesh,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
in the splendour of eternal light,  
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Baptism of Christ, Year A<sup>2</sup>*

CPL • LBC Year A Epiphany 1.odt • 2022-10-23

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2 *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*