

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD



Awaken Your Love

God of all creation,
you are holy indeed and worthy of
all praise.

In the waters of the Jordan,
you revealed Jesus as your beloved Son,
the Light who banishes the darkness and
rules with justice.

Help us to acknowledge Christ and listen to
his voice,

so that we, who are saved in the waters
of rebirth,

might remain faithful to the covenant and
forever proclaim your saving deeds.

May the Holy Spirit rouse us to reject our
selfish impulses and worldly desires,
and by dying to self,

may our lives bear witness to your glory
and may we ceaselessly serve your people.

Give us zeal to proclaim your justice and
peace, your compassion and mercy,
your joy and generosity.

Awaken your love within us and inspire us
to be a people of hope.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, January 10, 2016

Beloved



Today's Readings: Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7 or Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11; Psalm 29:1–2, 3–4, 3, 9–10 or Psalm 104:1b–2, 3–4, 24–25, 27–28, 29–30; Acts of the Apostles 10:34–38 or Titus 2:11–14; 3:4–7; Luke 3:15–16, 21–22. The readings for today draw us deeper into the mystery of the Incarnation while helping us consider our life in Christ. The First Reading announces the coming Messiah, who will set all free from bondage. In the Gospel, as the Father identifies Jesus as his beloved Son, the fulfillment of God's plan in Jesus is revealed.

God's power is manifest in Jesus Christ, who saves us from sin. Christ is also to be manifest in us. The Holy Spirit has renewed us in the waters of Baptism, and we are sent forth to radiate God's glory. In Baptism, we are plunged into

the waters of life, shedding our old self and rising to new life. As Paul writes in the Second Reading, we have become heirs to eternal life and share in the mission of Christ. This is a tremendous gift. Like the psalmist, we respond to God's love by saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

At the close of this season and the beginning of Ordinary Time, delve deeper into these readings and ask yourself, "Do I take my Baptism seriously?" What does it look like to walk as a child of the Light? As a member of the Body of Christ, in what ways do you proclaim God's justice and peace? Finally, in your prayer this week, imagine God saying to you at your Baptism and now, "You are my beloved son/daughter and I love you!"



THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Ordinary Time

Growing up, I never really liked Ordinary Time. It seemed long, boring, and without festive celebrations. Since then, I have come to appreciate the simplicity and beauty of this long period on our liturgical calendar. Ordinary Time is divided into two periods. The first begins the day after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and ends the day prior to Ash Wednesday (February 10). The second, and longest period, begins after Pentecost and ends the Saturday after the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. The word *ordinary* means “ordered.” It is called this because we number the weeks outside of festal time to help us mark the time. In *Eternity Today: On the Liturgical Year*, author Martin Connell states, “The two spans of Ordinary Time . . . are when the deeds and teachings of the Old Testament, of the early church, and of Jesus of Nazareth are told to nurture, calm, inspire, and animate God’s people at worship” (vol. 2 [New York: Continuum, 2006], 198). It is, then, a season to what it means to be a disciple of Christ and to practice the faith we profess. As we look ahead to the next five weeks, let us be mindful of God’s awesome deeds and be inspired to love more fervently.

Thursday, January 21, 2016

Memorial of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

Our tradition tells us Agnes was beautiful. Many men wanted to marry her, but she promised the Lord she would remain pure for him. In time, she was imprisoned for being a Christian and eventually martyred. Agnes, chosen by God, was an instrument of goodness in the world. Her life proclaimed God’s love for his people. On this day in Rome, the pope blesses two sheep. The wool from these sheep is used to make the pallium for archbishops. Another tradition today is to bake a lamb cake to recall the sacrifice Agnes made. As you eat the cake, retell her story and pray for those imprisoned because of their belief in Jesus. *Today’s Readings:* 1 Samuel 18:6–9; 19:1–7; Psalm 56:2–3, 9–10a, 10b–11, 12–13; Mark 3:7–12.

Monday, January 25, 2016

Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle

Before his conversion, Paul persecuted Christians and even sought them out to imprison them. This feast invites us to consider how our encounters with Christ—whether in the baptismal waters or in our daily gatherings—transform us. Paul was forever changed on that road to Damascus, and like the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel command, he goes forth proclaiming the Good News to all people. After this Advent and Christmas season, how will you shed your old self to rise anew with Christ? In what ways will you announce the Good News of salvation? *Today’s Readings:* Acts of the Apostles 22:3–16 or 9:1–22; Psalm 117:1bc, 2; Mark 16:15–18.

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

As we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, it may seem as though we have returned to Christmas Time. The prayers on this fortieth day after Christmas refer to Christ as the “Light of the nations.” The Gospel reading reminds us that Jesus is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). It was Simeon and Anna who recognized the divine child, the King of Glory who became like us to save us from our sins. This feast reminds us that Jesus is truly the light that banishes all darkness and purifies all peoples so they might share in God’s goodness. At Mass today, many parishes will bless the candles used throughout the year. The liturgy begins with the blessing and a candlelight procession to remind us that Jesus is our light in the darkness. *Today’s Readings:* Malachi 3:1–4; Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10; Hebrews 2:14–18; Luke 2:22–40 or 2:22–32.

