

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

2021—B Cycle



Source: wallpapercave.com

For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

Exception: In the course of these reflections, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

Opening Prayer

A final word about Christmas, as we close the Season
(*edited for use here*)

"A Christmas Blessing"

by [Wilda English](#)

May God grant you the light of Christmas, which is *faith*;
the warmth of Christmas, which is *love*;
the righteousness of Christmas, which is *justice*;
the belief in Christmas, which is *truth*;
the all of Christmas, which is *Christ*.

Introduction to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

At the close of the Christmas Season, [Fr. Daniel Mahan](#) asks us to take a realistic look at our baptism and participation in our Roman Catholic community.

"Baptism is entrance into the life of Jesus Christ and his Church. This life is *not* a hobby, *nor* is it an avocation.¹ The life of following Jesus entails our total commitment, following him and living according to his will. We do not dabble in holiness, nor is holiness a hobby."

— *Bible Diary 2009*, commentary for Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Footnote

1. [Avocation defined](#)

Readings:

Isaiah 55: 1-11 “All you who are thirsty, come to the water.”

(Alternate: Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7)

Responsorial: Isaiah 12: 2-6 “God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid.”

(Alternate: Psalm 29)

First Letter of St. John (5: 1-9) “Everyone who loves the Father loves also one begotten by them.”

Mark 1: 7-11 John the Baptist said: “One mightier than I is to come after me.”

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (55: 1-11)

“Come here, all you who are thirsty, come to the water! All who have no money, come! Yes, without money and at no cost, buy and drink wine and milk. Why spend money on what is not food and labor for what does not satisfy? Listen to me, and you will eat well; you will enjoy the richest of fare. Incline your ear and come to me; listen, that your soul may live.

“I will make with you an everlasting Covenant, I will fulfill in you my promises to David. See, I have given him for a witness to the nations, a leader and commander of the people. Likewise you will summon a nation unknown to you, and nations that do not know you will come hurrying to you for the sake of Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has promoted you.

“Seek Yahweh while he may be found;
call to him while he is near.
Let the wicked abandon his way,
let him forsake his thoughts,
let him turn to Yahweh for he will have mercy,
for our God is generous in forgiving.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
my ways are not your ways, says Yahweh.
For as the heavens are above the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts above your thoughts.
As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens
and do not return till they have watered the earth,
making it yield seed for the sower
and food for others to eat,
so my word goes forth out of my mouth.
It will not return to me idle,
but it shall accomplish my will,
the purpose for which it has been sent.”

Personal Reflection

Second Isaiah's final words end with a call to hope for the exiled Hebrews in Babylonia. Looked at from a Christian perspective, Verses 1-3 remind us that God always gives first. God hopes we will open the door for him. Jesus too will offer us rest in Matthew 11: 28: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

Jesus will also give us the bread of life in John 6: 35, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."



He wants to be our best friend (Revelation 3: 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me."). In the painting, notice that there is no latch or doorknob on the outside. The Lord waits for our invitation, "Come in!"

A universal mission awaits Israel upon the exiles' return. In Verses 6-9, the prophet invites the Israelites to *allow themselves to be conquered by the love of the Lord* who is forming them (and us) in more ways than they (we) can imagine.

Paul uses similar language in his letter to the Romans 5:10, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life." So, Happy New Year!!

"Turn to Yahweh for he will have mercy, for our God is generous in forgiving."
— *If I carry on my conscience something I consider "unforgivable," how might this word of the prophet help me to let go and see that the real or imagined sin burdening me is already wiped from my soul by my "merciful" and "generous" God?*

— *Since God has forgiven me, why do I insist on carrying that burden on my soul (except as a reminder of God's abundant mercy)?*

Responsorial: From the Book of Isaiah (12: 2-6)

Song of the saved

You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

"I give praise to you, O Yahweh.
Although you have been angry with me
your anger has been appeased
and you have consoled me.

You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

He is the God of my salvation;
in him I trust and am not afraid,

Yahweh is my strength:
him I will praise, the one who saved me.”
You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

You will draw water with joy from the very fountain of salvation.

Then you will say:
“Praise to Yahweh, break into songs of joy for him,
proclaim his marvelous deeds among the nations
and exalt his Name.”
You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Sing to Yahweh, “Wonders he has done!
Let these be known all over the earth.
Sing for joy, O people of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel.”
You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Personal Reflection

“Yahweh is my strength: him I will praise, the one who saved me.”

— *In what ways do I allow Yahweh to “be my strength”? Be specific. Or am I a “I can do it myself!” kind of person?*

“Sing to Yahweh, ‘Wonders he has done. Let these be known all over the earth.’”

— *What “wonders” has Yahweh brought into my life? Be specific. Make a list (let it be as long as you wish). If I list God’s wonders in my life, what are the five most important “wonders” on my list?*

— *How vocal have I been in sharing God’s wonders to me with others? If I keep it all to myself, how do I explain that to myself?*

— *How have I passed these wonders on to others in word, action, and prayer?*

From the First Letter of St. John (10: 34-38)

“All those, who believe that Jesus is the Anointed are born of God. Whoever loves the Father, loves the Son. How may we know that we love the children of God?

If we love God and fulfill his commands, for God’s love requires us to keep his commands. In fact, his commandments are not a burden, because all those born of God overcome the world. And the victory which overcomes the world is our faith. Who has overcome the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus Christ was acknowledged through water, but also through blood. Not only water, but water and blood. And the Spirit, too, witnesses to him, for the Spirit is truth. There are, then, three testimonies: Spirit, water, and blood. And these three witnesses agree. If we accept human testimony, with greater reason must we accept that of God, given in favor of his Son.”

Personal Reflection

John the Apostle most likely wrote these words from the home he shared with Mary ("[Mary's House](#)"), outside the city of Ephesus. Those who love their brothers and sisters are known by their love for God. God's love for us impels us to love other people. This kind of love is more than "sentimental love," such as attraction to external appearance, behavior, money, and reciprocity.

John lists three complementary aspects of Christian experience found in Jesus himself. He characterizes them as *water*, *blood*, and *Spirit*.

Water: symbol of cleanliness and new life.

Blood: the blood of the sacrifice, painful atonement for sin, the blood of martyrs.

Spirit is the third aspect of Christian experience.

These three correspond to the sacraments of Baptism (water), Eucharist (blood), and Confirmation (Spirit).

(Edited and abridged from Catholic Pastoral Bible commentary)

— *What is at least one sign that I see in myself that I'm not just "playing at" being "in Christ" as a Catholic or follower of another Christian denomination?*

— *What signs of growth do I see in my commitment to my faith community (parish and ministry), its core beliefs and its way of life?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (1: 7-11)



“(John) preached to the people, saying, ‘After me comes one who is more powerful than I am; I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.’ At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth, a town of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And the moment he came up out of the water, heaven opened before him, and he saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And these words were heard from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved, the One I have chosen.’”

Personal Reflection

In this passage, John the Baptist announces the coming of the One sent by God, Jesus, about whom the Gospel will speak to us as the one announced and prepared by all the great witnesses of the Old Testament. In him and by him God's salvation will be accomplished.

— *If I am a baptized as a Catholic or in another Christian denomination, how old was I at the time of my baptism? Where did I receive the sacrament? Who are my godparents?*

— *What impact has my baptism had on the way I've lived my life?*

— *If I am now preparing to seek baptism, what difference do I want this sacrament to make in my daily life?*

The Week Ahead

We have just experienced what many consider the strangest Christmas Season of our lives.

Journaling Prompts

— *What was something positive and special that happened to me and my family during the Christmas Season?*

— *If I experienced a time of deep sorrow or disappointment during the holidays, how did I recognize the love and will of God in that situation?*

Take some time to write down your memories and reactions during the holiday season.

For Inspirational Reading / Viewing

Videos:

In 2016, Bishop Robert Barron gave an excellent homily on the Feast of the [Baptism of Jesus](#) (15 min.) Recorded at Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA

[Johnny Cash](#) reads the Gospel of the [Baptism of Jesus](#) (1.5 min.) He'd be a great lector!

Book:

In his homily (above), Bishop Barron speaks about St. Augustine's 4th century autobiography, *Confessions*, calling it the first *known* autobiography in history. He recommends it to Catholic readers. You can find it on [Amazon](#) and other booksellers in all formats.

Music:

[Baptism of Jesus](#) composed and sung by [Peg Angell](#) (5.5 min)

Preview of Next Week's Scriptures

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Book of Samuel 3: 3-10, 19) "The Lord called to (the young boy) Samuel, who answered, 'Here I am.'"

Responsorial: Psalm 40: 2, 4, 7-10 "I have waited, waited for the Lord. . . ."

First Corinthians 6: 13-15, 17-20 "Glorify God in your body."

John 1: 35-42 "As Jesus walked by, (John the Baptist) said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'"

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

“I Am There”

By Karl Rahner in [*The Eternal Year*](#)* (1964)

God says to us what Jesus has already said to the earth as a whole,
through His grace-filled birth:

I am there. I am with you.
I am your life. I am your time.
I am the gloom of your daily routine. Why will you not hear it?
I weep your tears—pour yours out to me.
I am your joy. Do not be afraid to be happy.
Ever since I wept, joy is the standard of living,
more suitable than the anxiety and grief of those who have no hope.
I am the blind alley of all your paths.
When you no longer know how to go forward,
you have reached me, though you are not aware of it.
I am in your anxiety, for I have shared it.
I am in the prison of your finiteness, for my love has made me your prisoner.
I am in your death, for today I began to die with you, because I was born,
and I have not let myself be spared any real part of this experience.
I am present in your needs; I have suffered them and they are now transformed.
I am there. I no longer go away from this world. Even if you do not see me now,
I am there.

My love is unconquerable. I am there.

** Available only in paperback*

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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(follow this link to my spiritual novel, [*Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*](#))