

A NOTE TO PARENTS

"When Jesus grew up, he set out to do God's work." In this season of Epiphany we begin to consider what that work is.

The time scheme we are working with may be confusing to your children. On this first Sunday of Epiphany we are back with our old friend John the Baptist. We met John in Advent as we waited for the Savior's coming. Then we turned back in time, to when both John and Jesus were unborn children, eagerly awaited by their mothers, who knew that God was planning something very special. Then we rejoiced at the birth of the Messiah: baby Jesus in the manger, at Christmas. Now we turn to Jesus' baptism. But though many of us are baptized as babies, Jesus was not. Baby Jesus has grown up; so has John, who entered public ministry some time before Jesus and proclaimed his coming to the people.

Jesus is the Messiah, the *anointed one*. Messiah is the Hebrew word (as Christ is the Greek word) for "anointed." To *anoint* someone means to rub them with oil. Oil was used in ancient times for cleansing, healing, and perfuming; precious oil, anointing kings and priests, showed they were set aside to do holy work. How many stories of Jesus' work can your child think of? What do they have in common? How can you describe Jesus' work as a whole? How do you suppose Jesus came to know that God had chosen him as the Messiah, the "anointed one?"

The accounts of Jesus' baptism describe the Spirit resting on Jesus like a dove. Doves are a symbol of peace; they were also, along with lambs, the most common sacrificial animals in the Temple ritual of Jesus' time. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is hailed by John the Baptist as the "Lamb of God," who would die on the altar for our sins. God's work is the work of peace; but for Jesus it led to the Cross. As you put away Christmas cards or holiday decorations, help your child find lambs and doves in their designs. You may want to cut them out and make a mobile or collage. Add a cut-out star for Epiphany, and place your design where it will remind you of the Messiah's work of sacrifice and peace.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER, 19 Colony Road, New Haven, CT 06511, USA
203 - 624-2520 • www.the-sunday-paper.com

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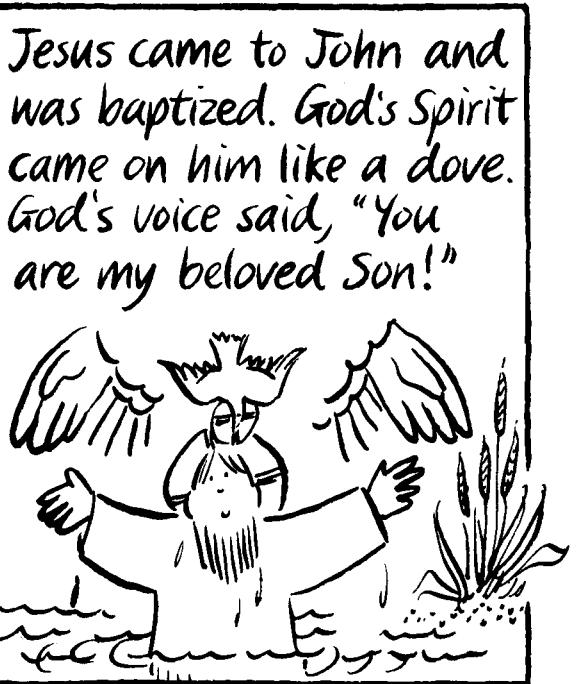
Year C
1st SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

Jesus was baptized by John.

LUKE 3:21



WHEN JESUS GREW UP, HE SET OUT TO DO GOD'S WORK.



When Jesus was thirty years old, he knew that God had chosen him as the Messiah, the special leader who would save God's people. He came to be baptized, to show he was ready to do God's work.



What are some of the ways that God's Spirit gave Jesus power to do his work? Decorate the Bible verse with some pictures of Jesus doing the work of the Messiah.