

The Baptism of the Lord

What We Found

- The sinless One stood in the sinners' water on purpose: not to be cleansed by it but to fulfill all righteousness at the head of the penitent, and, as the early Church confessed, to sanctify the water itself: he cleansed the river; the river did not cleanse him.
- The threads the study has counted arrive together here, as the Church has traditionally read the scene: the Spirit over the waters (Genesis 1:2), the dove over the waters (Genesis 8), the Jordan of entry, water then Spirit, and the heavens standing open.
- The Spirit descended *and remained*, and the Baptist drew the conclusion: *this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit* (John 1:32–33).
- The Father's voice declared identity before any performance: *This is my beloved Son*. Father, Son, and Spirit were all present at the water: the Trinity manifested together at a baptism, which is why we are baptized in the threefold Name.
- Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus (CCC 537): the Jordan scene is what every font confers: opened heavens, the Spirit, adoption as beloved sons and daughters (CCC 537, 1265).

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch • *Letter to the Ephesians, ch. 18*

“For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God's plan... He was born and baptized, that by his passion he might purify the water.”

St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch and disciple of the apostolic generation, wrote this on the road to his martyrdom around the year 107: within living memory of the apostles, the Church already confessed that the Lord's baptism was for the water's sake, and ours.

St. Maximus of Turin • *Sermons on the Epiphany*

St. Maximus, a fifth-century bishop, teaches in substance that Christ went down into the Jordan not to be made holy by the waters but to make the waters holy: the river did not wash him; he washed the river, and in it every font to come, and the Church's Epiphany preaching extended the thought to the font: the water of Baptism carries the power of his sanctification.

The Church's Liturgy • *Preface of the Baptism of the Lord (Roman Missal)*

On the feast of the Lord's Baptism the Church prays that in the waters of the Jordan the Father revealed with signs and wonders a new Baptism: by the voice from heaven we might believe the Word dwelling among us, and by the Spirit descending as a dove we might know Christ anointed to bring good news to the poor.

The Church's own prayer illuminates tonight's whole approach: the Jordan event revealed a new Baptism; CCC 537 completes the application to us.

Live It This Week

- Find out or confirm the date of your Baptism (Session 1's assignment, now with its full meaning) and put it in your calendar as a yearly feast. If you found it then, tell someone this week what happened on it.

- Each morning, at water (a shower, a sink, a font), say once: I am a beloved son / a beloved daughter; heaven was opened over my Baptism.
- Read CCC 535–537 slowly once this week and underline every phrase that says the Jordan scene is about you.
- If there are children in your life, tell them the story of their own baptism day this week: who was there, what was said, how the water was poured. Give them a memory of the voice.

Memory Verse

and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:17 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read John 3:1–21. A teacher of Israel comes to Jesus by night and hears the sentence this whole study is named for.

Catechism references: 535–537, 1223–1224, 701