

The Baptism of the Lord – January 11, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Thus says the LORD: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

Psalm: Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

R. (11b) The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Give to the LORD, you sons of God,
give to the LORD glory and praise,
Give to the LORD the glory due his name;
adore the LORD in holy attire.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters,
the LORD, over vast waters.
The voice of the LORD is mighty;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

The God of glory thunders,
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"
The LORD is enthroned above the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Scripture Reading: Acts 10:34-38

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

A few years ago I was privileged to write music for *As a River of Light*, which is the story of Jesus' passion according to Luke.* The librettist, Michael Dennis Browne, and I had a good time conceiving the opening scene in which many different people approached John the Baptist and spoke out their names as they were baptized. Michael was away from home, but we needed specific names for the people. So I went to a friend who is also a scholar of the scriptures, Fr. Dennis Hamm. I told him I wanted names of people from the New Testament era, but I did not want them to sound formal and starchy: daily names that people used for short. Could he think of any? Dennis paused a fraction of a second and said, "you mean like 'Jack the Dipper'?" The hilarity of the moment did not mask the fact that the word baptism does derive from a word meaning *to dip*. After we got a list of names, I went off to compose music for the scene, with Jesus as just another person in the lineup of people to be baptized. This emphasizes Jesus' humility. As you know, Jesus' baptism had a spectacular climax. The heavens opened and Jesus saw the Holy Spirit descending upon him like a dove. He heard from heaven the following words: "You are my beloved and in you I am well pleased." I loved writing music for these words. As it happened, the first violinist for the recording showed up with a Stradivarius, making the violin solo particularly poignant.

The words are also echoes of the First Reading (from Isaiah) we will hear this Sunday. *Here is my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit ... ; a bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth.* Both readings are loving, gentle and filled with promise. What I did not realize—even after several performances and a recording session—was that such a short sentence, put to music, would be the one everybody would choose as their favorite moment from the whole musical: the tender voice of God, saying "You are my beloved and in you I am well pleased." It seems to have captured many hearts. I suspect people hear God's voice saying the same thing to them, even today. God's love for us naturally evokes our mutual love for God. Jesus heard the voice of love and immediately went to the desert to prepare the giving of his whole life to God in gratitude. If you and I ever begin to grasp the meaning of "you are my beloved," we too will begin to live our lives out of thankfulness to the one who stands behind the words. That strange name, "Jack the Dipper," started me toward an understanding of the sacrament of Baptism, even if it is the Baptism of the Lord himself. It says loud and clear to the infant or the adult being baptized, "Come in. Be washed. You are much beloved to God and to the Church." I hope you and I can remember those words all the days of our lives.

*The CD *As a River of Light* is available by calling 1-800-LITURGY. We listen to it every Good Friday without fail.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. If enlightening the world isn't in the cards for you, is there one dark corner you can brighten somehow?
2. Peter said that "in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." Were the Israelites no longer special? How do you think Peter would explain Israel's place in God's plan?
3. Was the Trinity present at the baptism of Jesus? Do you think the Father and Holy Spirit were with Jesus throughout his entire earthly life even when he was on the cross? How does that thought make you feel about God the Father and the Holy Spirit? Do you think they are with you even when you feel as though they are absolutely not?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty ever-living God, who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him, solemnly declared him your beloved Son, grant that your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, may always be well pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen