

Today's Readings

Isaiah 42:1–2, 4, 6–7

Psalm 29:3abde–4,
3VOL.e & 9ef–10

Acts 10:34–38

Luke 3:15–16, 21–22

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a white cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers
- ☐ a metal spoon
- ☐ three clear glass tumblers with water in them: one ¼ full, one ½ full and one filled almost to the top

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"One Family"

(Seeds VOL.-1, Track #12)
or "The Baptism of Jesus"
(Promise & Good News
VOL.-2, Track #16)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Alleluia" (Promise
& Good News VOL.-2,
Track #24)

Jesus Is Baptized

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

*All of you angels in Heaven,
honor the glory and power of the LORD!
Honor the wonderful name of the LORD,
and worship the Lord most holy
and glorious (PSALM 29:1-2)*

Scripture Background

Today's readings begin with the first of four lyrical poems called "Songs of the Suffering Servant," which are found in the Book of Isaiah. Scholars long have debated the identity of the Suffering Servant. Does he represent the prophet Isaiah himself, all prophets in general, the Jewish nation, a faithful remnant of the Jewish nation, or the promised Messiah?

Because the Church teaches that several layers of meaning are possible in a biblical passage, we may take the Suffering Servant to be all of these. In the context of today's feast, however, commemorating the baptism of Christ, we take this lyrical poem as a prophecy about the Messiah.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles features Peter preaching the Good News to the household of Cornelius, a Roman centurion stationed in the city of Caesarea. Peter has come at the pious centurion's personal request.

Through this account, the author of Acts assures non-Jewish readers that persons of all nations are welcome to enter the Christian community. Why should one wish to belong? As Peter explains, the proof that Jesus came from God was provided in the many wonders he worked through the power of the Holy Spirit. And what the Messiah has done for others can be done for them, too, if they but welcome his Spirit into their lives.

Today's Gospel teaches that while salvation is offered to all, repentance is a precondition of receiving it. When Jesus steps forward to receive John's





baptism of repentance, although Jesus himself is without sin, he is publicly expressing his agreement with John's teaching: The messianic kingdom is imminent, but belonging to it will not be possible for those who do not first renounce sin. Jesus teaches by example, just as a mother demonstrates for a young child how to drink water from a cup by first drinking a little of it herself.

For those who are earnestly awaiting the Promised One, God grants a humble yet wonderful sign in the sudden appearance of the dove over Jesus' head.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Help the kids vividly imagine the scene at the Jordan River on the day Jesus went there to be baptized.

Tell the group that if they were to look out upon an entire crowd of people gathered to hear John the Baptist speak, they would need help picking out the one person in the crowd who was the Messiah. They, too, would need to see some special sign from God in order to recognize the Messiah.

The Children's Leaflet

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps the children learn about the baptism of Jesus, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

Senses of Scripture

Numbers 115-119 of *Catechism of the Catholic Church* outlines four different levels of meaning in Scripture. Using quotes from today's reading from Isaiah, it becomes more clear what the levels mean.

"He won't quit or give up until he brings justice to all the earth, and people in foreign lands long for his teaching" (Isaiah 42:4).

- The *literal* sense is the factual level of meaning. In our example, Isaiah is saying something factually true of the servant.
- The *allegorical* sense is the symbolic level of meaning. The Suffering Servant described in Isaiah's words is a symbol of the Messiah, among other things.
- The *moral* sense of Scripture teaches something about right and wrong in human conduct. From our example, we learn that the good person is tireless in working toward justice and truth.
- The *anagogical* sense in some way teaches about humanity's eternal destiny. From Isaiah 42:2, ("He won't shout or yell or call out in the street.") we can surmise that people who long for justice and truth will be completely satisfied in Heaven.

Leaflet Activity

Families review baptismal mementos of the children and talk about what Baptism means. The activity is a crossword puzzle. The solution is shown here for your convenience.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

After the children are seated in the worship area, point out the three glasses of water. Have the children listen closely to the sound made when you tap the glass that is half full. Then ask for a show of hands as you point to the glass that is one-quarter full: how many think this glass will ring with a higher tone than the one that is half full? Then strike the glass.

After the group hears that the pitch is higher, ask someone who raised a hand how he or she knew this would happen. Accept whatever answer the child gives, but if the child doesn't specifically say so, point out that less water in the glass is one sure sign that the sound it makes will be higher, just as more water in a glass is a sign that the sound it makes will be lower. Then strike the full glass to demonstrate this.

Point out that back when people were still waiting for the Messiah to come, only those with faith were able to read the signs that Jesus was the one for whom they were waiting. Today's Gospel will describe a sign given to them on the day of Jesus' baptism.

Collect

LEADER: Please bow your heads for prayer. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy."

Lord Jesus, the day John baptized you in the Jordan River, those with faith saw an important sign that told them you were the Messiah. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, you give faith to see your presence among us today. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, today you speak to us through the words of Scripture, and you come to us in the form of consecrated Bread and Wine. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In the first part of this reading, God the Father talks to us about his Son. In the second part, the Father talks directly to his Son.

Read Isaiah 42:1-2, 4, 6-7. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

CHILDREN: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 29:3abde-4, 3VOL.e and 9ef-10.*

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, the Apostle Peter speaks in the house of a Roman centurion who lives in a seaside town. The soldier's whole family wants to know all about the Risen Lord Jesus, whom they have heard about.

Read Acts 10:34-38. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: Today's Gospel tells about a special sign that was given to all people of faith the day that Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Luke 3:15-16, 21-22. Then say,
"The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask the children to be seated.

Homily

- Point out that, according to Bible experts, only Jesus heard the words spoken by the Heavenly Father on the day Jesus was baptized.
- Explain that up to the time of his baptism, Jesus had been keeping his real identity a secret. Now he was about to begin working the mighty deeds that would show everyone he was the Messiah.
- The people who were present that day received a sign, too. Ask what it was. (The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove.)
- To know why this sign was important, we must keep in mind a few facts:
 - Even the prophet John the Baptist didn't yet know who the Messiah was.
 - John gathered huge crowds wherever he preached. On the day of his baptism, Jesus was just another face in the crowd.
 - Then suddenly a dove hovered above Jesus at the moment of his baptism. To anyone without faith, it was just a bird.
 - People of faith, however, knew it was a sign of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit was pointing out to them the long-awaited Messiah. What a gift!

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, "Yes, I do believe." Do you believe in God, the Father, who spoke to his Son in a voice from Heaven the day Jesus was baptized?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sent by the Father to save all people from sin and death?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who appeared above Jesus in the form of a dove the day he was baptized?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As people of faith are able to read the signs of God's presence among us, let us ask our ever-present, ever-faithful God to satisfy the needs of our Church and our world. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That our Holy Father and all bishops, priests, and Church leaders will bring to the world the same hope and love that Christ brings, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That the leaders of all nations will shepherd their people as Christ shepherds his Church, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That we will always be as eager to learn about Christ as the Roman family that Peter visited in today's Second Reading, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, on the day Jesus was baptized, you sent the Holy Spirit to show people of faith that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. May we always be alert to the signs of Christ's continuing presence among us today. This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.