

The Baptism of the Lord

January 11, 2026

Here is my servant.

He went about doing good.

Jesus is baptized.

-rvb.

Moments of Grace are a source for spiritual nourishment and growth.

Sacraments are doorways to the sacred, pathways to mystical moments and icons of the living God who scratches the underbelly of our spiritual musings. At times, however, the doors are bolted, the pathways become uncharted mazes, and mystical moments slip into magical rites especially when we find ourselves simply moving through the motions. Do you spend time thinking about the meaning, the message, and the opportunities to tap into the graces every day of the sacraments. If kept alive, will allow God's divine energy to flow in, around, through, and within you? "Grace and gracelets are moments of meaning in your everyday life, that is, a state of mind that sees God in everything which is indicative of growth in grace and a thankful heart." -Charles G. Finney.

Are you consciously living a life of sacramentalism? That is, objects, places, events, and relationships can be reminders, reflections, metaphors, analogies, symbols, and experiences of God's divine reality. "The winds of grace are always blowing, but you must raise the sail. These gifts move across the waters. We cannot control or earn them, but we must be willing to receive them." – Ramakrishna.

Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen hosted a television weekly series in the early 1950s which was very popular. He used the image of the universe as a windowpane; you see through the visible to the invisible God. The world around you is infused with the Holy Spirit, and the wisdom traditions of

our Catholic faith encourage us to look for hints of God in the world around us.

Poetry and story are essential ingredients in exploring the inner world of OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults). OCIA restores the original order and meaning to the sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation – the trinity of the sacramental life of the church. Poetry and story can be “soul friends” of OCIA. They can inject new life, power, and relevance into the drooping liturgical and spiritual lives of all of us as Catholic Christians.

The following poem captures my experience, vision, and imaginative expression and celebration of Baptism:

Water pours over my head.

My soul is made pure and new.

Eternal life emerges.

A true child of grace.

An eternal bond is formed.

Embraced by one's faith.

What is your poetic vision of Baptism when you drink water, take a shower, go swimming, bless yourself from the water font, or are reminded that more than a billion people on this earth do not have clean drinking water? Do you take water for granted, wasting water, appreciating water, giving thanks for water, or do you in the words of Socrates, move through life without ever thinking about the meaning of your baptism, and how vital and life-giving water is?

Baptism: A Story to Remember

While poetry captures the depth of sacramental life in a few carefully chosen words, the story complements, completes, and creates a happy, lasting, and living remembrance.

During the baptismal rite, the parents are reminded of their formidable Christian responsibility: “You are to be the first teachers of your child...” Have your parents fulfilled this mandate? The following story is called: “First Teachers” – When John was six years old, he was with his father who was stopped for speeding. His father slipped the officer a twenty-dollar bill with his license. “It is OK son, everyone does it.” When John was nine years old, he went shopping with his mother. The cashier accidentally gave her too much change. As she slipped the extra money in her purse, she whispered to her son, “Everyone does it.” At sixteen, John landed his first summer job at the supermarket. One of his jobs was to put the overripe tomatoes at the bottom of the basket and the greener ones at the top. The boss told him, “It is good business.” John began his college career. One day he was approached by another student and asked if he wanted to buy some tests. He did and was subsequently caught for cheating. He was placed on probation. His parents were disappointed and said, “Son, how could you have done such a dishonest action like cheating? You have disgraced us!” Ironically, it was the parents, friends, and the employer who were not models, mentors, motivators, molders, and messengers of their faith life and work ethic.

“It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being.” -Acts 17:28.

Roger J. Vanden Busch.

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Reading I

[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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

The reading from Isaiah is the first of the “Suffering Servant” songs which exalt the servant as the chosen one like Moses, David, or Israel. The servant will be establish in the land and speak in the name of the marginalized. This servant of Israel will be “Godward,” that is, the Spirit will equip him to pass judgment on the social injustices. He will be “selfward,” meaning he will be self-effacing. The servant will be

“person-ward,” reaching out and being gentle with those who need assistance and support, yet courageous, committed, and determined until the God-ward and God-given task of establishing peace and justice will be fulfilled.

Dorothy Day, 1897-1980, co-founder of the Catholic Worker, was baptized in 1927 at the same age of thirty as Jesus was when he began his public life. In 1932, her faith life was waning when she met Peter Maurin at the shrine of Mary. What can be said of a woman, always radical, but who after becoming baptized as a Christian, had a vision of the challenges of the social-minded Gospels. In many ways she continued to reaffirm her baptismal commitment each time she experienced rejection, hardship, and criticism from the religious and civil leaders who perceived her as a Marxist, a romantic, a feminist while she thought and spoke of herself as a daughter of the Church. In our baptism, with each challenge we experience when striving to promote social justice, especially for immigrants who are arrested without due process, we die each time and rise with Christ. As Dorothy says, “Very often, when one must live on blind and naked faith, God sends intimations of immortality. He restores us to the Way and no matter what our wandering, we can still say – All is Grace.”

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 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.

Reading II

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 the message and po
and healing all those oppressed by the devil,
for God was with him."**

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In the second reading from Acts, this is part of Peter's discourse at Caesarea in the house of the pagan, Cornelius. This is quite an admonition on the part of Peter considering the differing beliefs of Peter and Paul on this question. Do the Gentiles have to be circumcised and follow the dietary laws of the Jews? The narrow-minded, hard-headed Peter admits to his short-sightedness about the Jews alone were chosen by God to achieve salvation. We experience Peter's formal admission of the first Gentile convert into the Christian community. The disposition and message of God is a respecter of persons, his grace transcending all barriers, differences, or cultural socialization. Peter then proceeds to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus, the "good news" of universal salvation – "they are one of us."

There is a joke about the devout Protestant who dies and is met by St. Peter at the pearly gates for a tour of heaven. As the tour goes on St. Peter points out all the different denominations, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and so forth. As they come to a certain group way off to themselves, St. Peter draws the man closer and whispers, "Now, for this next group, we

need to be quiet. They are the Catholics and they think they are the only ones up here.”

Alleluia

Cf. Mark 9:7

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The heavens were opened and the voice of the Father thundered:

This is my beloved Son, listen to him.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

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.”

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

The Gospel of Matthew does recognize the baptism of Jesus, while the focus is more on the words of God's voice as he identifies Jesus as the Son upon whom his favor rests. Jesus is baptized to obey his Father's command and to fulfill his plan of salvation. When Jesus is baptized, he has an intimate, religious experience of his Father as related to his role as messiah. As Jesus begins his ministry to the marginalized, he comes to a deeper understanding of the challenges, demands, and implications of his role as messiah. Each one of us, because of our baptism, is challenged to renew and affirm our baptismal commitment every day. Otherwise, the waters of our baptism will become stagnant and still.

Jesus is baptized and is one of us. The song "One of Us," released in 1995, is a thought-provoking song by Joan Osborne that explores the nature of God and humanity, asking profound questions about divinity and our relationship with the sacred through the Word made flesh, the Epiphany, and the waters of our baptism.

**So one of these nights and about twelve o'clock
This old world's going to reel and rock
Saints will tremble and cry for pain
For the Lord's going to come in his heavenly airplane**

**If God had a name, what would it be?
And would you call it to his face**

**If you were faced with Him in all His glory?
What would you ask if you had just one question?**

**And yeah, yeah, God is great
Yeah, yeah, God is good
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah**

What if God was one of us?

**Just a slob like one of us?
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home?**

**If God had a face, what would it look like?
And would you want to see
If seeing meant that you would have to believe
In things like Heaven and in Jesus and the saints
And all the prophets? And...**

**Yeah, yeah, God is great
Yeah, yeah, God is good
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah**

**What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home?**

**Trying' to make His way home
Back up to Heaven all alone
Nobody calling' on the phone
'Except for the Pope, maybe, in Rome.**

**At Jesus' baptism, he received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the
benediction of his Father. As the eternal Son, Jesus will be ever**

obedient and pleasing to his Father. Jesus' prayer in the Jordan might have been, "I must remember, John the Baptist, to tell you about this experience some day." The experience will be transforming in that we will throw off the old and put on the new. Baptism will be transfiguring because we become renewed children of God. Baptism will be tranquilizing because we will be at peace, filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Merton wrote of sacrament: "A transfiguration of simple and usual things, an elevation of the plainest and most natural acts to the level of the sublime. Indeed, the charity of God is sufficient to transform earth into heaven."

Final prayer: Today, Father, we join the Spirit of your son, Jesus, who is baptized and challenges us to review the vows of our baptism every year. Help us to stir the waters of our baptismal commitment and nourish the seeds of our spiritual renewal. Amen.

-Roger J. Vanden Busch.