

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD



Inbreaking

God our comfort,
you are with us!
You gather us in your arms,
embrace us in protection,
purify us,
and lead us with care.
We are filled with expectation—
help us to walk by your light
and see your inbreaking.
Send forth your Spirit
and renew the face of the earth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, January 12, 2025

New Creation



Today's readings: Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11; Psalm 104:1–4, 24–30; Titus 2:11–14, 3:4–7; Luke 3:15–16, 21–22.

John the Baptizer says: “One mightier than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” In other words, he will come to purify us. What a gift! Jesus did not need to be baptized, but in choosing to do so, he cleansed the waters and showed his solidarity with us so that we could be reconciled to God. In baptism, the Holy Spirit “moves us to answer Christ’s call to holiness... we are asked to walk by the light of Christ and to trust in his wisdom,” reads one contemporary catechism. Spend time this week contemplating your baptism. On that day, you

were welcomed into the Body of Christ and made a new creation. How does that inspire you?

On this first Sunday after the Epiphany (Monday, January 6), we hear that at Jesus’ baptism, God’s voice proclaimed: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” God continues to make “God’s self” known to us. As we enter this year’s long season after Epiphany consider how you will remember the joy of God becoming human every time you go to worship. How will you reflect on the gift of salvation long past the end of this Christmas season? Make it a point in your day to continue to be open to God’s presence.



This week and beyond

Monday, January 13

Turn around (repent) and follow Jesus

Jesus calls the first disciples: “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Simon, Andrew, James, and John abandon their nets and follow him. Find a parish where the sacrament of reconciliation is offered this week. Repent and respond to Jesus’ call to follow him. *Today’s readings: Heb 1:1–6; Ps 97:1–2, 6–7, 9; Mark 1:14–20.*

Luther’s reflections on the shepherds and angels

Look at the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night, and an angel came and made them apostles, prophets, and children of God... This is a great miracle that the shepherds should have believed this message. They might easily have thought to themselves, “Are we two shepherds worthy that the whole host of heaven should be marshaled for us and all the kings on the earth and the dwellers in Jerusalem be passed by?” I know I would have appealed to common sense and I would have said: “Who am I compared to God and angels and kings? It is an apparition.” But the Holy Spirit, who preached through the angels, caused the shepherds to believe. They were so strong in the faith that they were worthy to be spoken to by angels and to hear every angel in heaven singing a cantata just for them. This is a pure wonder that enters not into the heart of man. Our God begins with angels and ends with shepherds. Why does he do such preposterous things? He puts a Babe in a crib. Our common sense revolts and says, “Could not God have saved the world some other way?” (*Martin Luther’s Christmas Book*, pp. 36, 40)

Luther’s reflections on King Herod and the magi

When the Wise Men received the divine revelation that the king of the Jews was born, they made straight for Jerusalem, for, of course, they expected to find him at the capital in a lordly castle and a golden chamber. Where else would common sense expect to find a king? But because they were so sure of themselves, the star left them. Then they were sorely tried, and had they relied solely on human wisdom, would surely have said: “Confound it! We have come all this way for nothing. The star has deceived us. The devil has led us by an apparition. If a king had been born, would he not be in the capital and in a palace? But when we come, the star disappears, and we find no one who knows anything about him. Can it be that we foreigners

should be the first to have news of him in the royal city? Everyone is so cold and unfriendly that no one offers to go with us and show us the child. They do not believe themselves that to them a king is born, and shall we come and find him? How desolate for the birth of a king! If a puppy were born there would be some little stir, and here a king is supposed to be born, and everything is so still... Should not the people be singing, capering, lighting lamps and torches, bedecking the streets with roses and mayflowers? What a miserable king we are seeking! What fools we have been to let ourselves start on this quest!” Nature wants to feel and be certain before believing, but grace will believe before she feels. Faith steps gaily into the darkness, trusting simply in the Word. But having come, they decided to inquire of the king before returning. At their report, Herod the king “was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” Why was Herod terrified and all Jerusalem with him? He had good reason to be afraid because he had tyrannized over the Jews for thirty years... Now Herod had a crafty plan. “The Jews,” thought he, “will hide the truth from me, but I will find out the town where this king is to be born and also the time, and then if they hide him, I will catch him anyway. I will kill so many babies that he cannot escape.” So, he called the scribes to him and said, “Where is Christ to be born?” Then perhaps through fear, the scribes answered him that in the Prophet Micah it is written that He should be born in Bethlehem. (*Martin Luther’s Christmas Book*, pp. 50-52)

COMING SOON: Sunday, February 2 The Presentation of the Lord

The Presentation of the Lord is also known as Candlemas. Candles for use in worship in the year to come have been blessed this day to remember Christ, the light of the world. The Presentation refers to Jesus’ presentation in the temple 8 or 40 days after birth. Light a candle and say a prayer in gratitude for your faith. Since Jesus is fully human, he knows well our joys and struggles, and is thus “able to help those who are being tested.” Rest in peace today knowing that the Lord deeply understands all you are experiencing and is holding it with you. *Today’s readings: Malachi 3:1–4; Psalm 24:7–10; Hebrews 2:14–18; Luke 2:22–40.*