



# Celebrate

Baptism of Our Lord

January 7, 2024

*Our re-creation in baptism is an image of the Genesis creation, where the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Both Mark's gospel and the story in Acts make clear that it is the Spirit's movement that distinguishes Jesus' baptism from John's. The Spirit has come upon us as upon Jesus and the Ephesians, calling us God's beloved children and setting us on Jesus' mission to re-create the world in the image of God's vision of justice and peace.*

## Prayer of the Day

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Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, and transform us by your Spirit, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Genesis 1:1-5

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*Out of chaos, God brings order. Out of the formless void, God brings light. This familiar story was good news for the Israelites, who experienced much chaos in their history. It remains good news for us. God created and continues to create new life.*

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God

saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.



The voice of the LORD is up - on the wa - ters.

Ascribe to the <sup>1</sup> LORD, you gods,

ascribe to the LORD glo-<sup>1</sup>ry and strength.

<sup>2</sup>Ascribe to the LORD the glory <sup>1</sup> due God's name;

worship the LORD in the beau-<sup>1</sup>ty of holiness.

<sup>3</sup>The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of <sup>1</sup> glory thunders;  
the LORD is upon the <sup>1</sup> mighty waters.

<sup>4</sup>The voice of the LORD is a pow-<sup>1</sup>erful voice;

the voice of the LORD is a <sup>1</sup> voice of splendor. **R**

<sup>5</sup>The voice of the LORD breaks the <sup>1</sup> cedar trees;

the LORD breaks the ce-<sup>1</sup>dars of Lebanon;

<sup>6</sup>the LORD makes Lebanon skip <sup>1</sup> like a calf,

and Mount Hermon like a <sup>1</sup> young wild ox.

<sup>7</sup>The voice <sup>1</sup> of the LORD

bursts forth in <sup>1</sup> lightning flashes.

<sup>8</sup>The voice of the LORD <sup>1</sup> shakes the wilderness;

the LORD shakes the wilder-<sup>1</sup>ness of Kadesh. **R**

<sup>9</sup>The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe  
and strips the <sup>1</sup> forests bare.

And in the temple of the LORD all are <sup>1</sup> crying, "Glory!"

<sup>10</sup>The LORD sits enthroned a-<sup>1</sup>bove the flood;

the LORD sits enthroned as king for-<sup>1</sup>evermore.

<sup>11</sup>O LORD, give strength <sup>1</sup> to your people;

give them, O LORD, the bless-<sup>1</sup>ings of peace. **R**

*In Ephesus, Paul encounters people who had received John's baptism of repentance but had never heard of the Holy Spirit or of baptism in the name of Jesus. After Paul baptizes them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and empowers them with gifts of the Spirit.*

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples.<sup>2</sup> He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup> Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism."<sup>4</sup> Paul said, "John baptized with the

baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus."<sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.<sup>6</sup> When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—<sup>7</sup>altogether there were about twelve of them.

## Gospel

Mark 1:4-11

*Mark's gospel reports the story of Jesus' baptism with some irony: the one on whom the Spirit descends is himself the one who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit.*

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>5</sup> And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.<sup>6</sup> Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.<sup>7</sup> He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after

me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.<sup>8</sup> I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.<sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.<sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

# Prayers of Intercession

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The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God's blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

Inspire wisdom and a spirit of proclamation in your church, God of forgiveness. Uplift leaders (*church leaders may be named*) to share the truth of your word in community. Encourage us to live into the promises of baptism, working for justice and peace in all the world. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

Renew your creation, God of thunder and mighty waters. Restore the rivers in which your children are baptized. May fields flourish and grow. Summon the stewards and caretakers of the land to cherish your good works. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

Give strength to your leaders, God who is present in every country and community. Raise up leaders committed to equity and healing. Grant them discernment and compassion as they lead in love. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

Protect and cherish the most vulnerable among us, God of strength. Accompany those separated from family or hurting from broken relationships. Shelter our unhoused neighbors and any experiencing poverty. Protect those incarcerated in prisons and detention centers. Care for the sick and suffering (*especially*). God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

Encourage this congregation, God who calls and sends disciples. Guide us in accompanying, learning from, and serving our neighbors on the margins, following the example of Jesus. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Trusting the assurance of the Holy Spirit, we remember all who have died and rest in God's care. Give hope to those who grieve even as we rest in your eternal promise of resurrection. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## Preparing for Next Week

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**Monday** Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36. **Tuesday** Acts 22:2-16. **Wednesday** Isaiah 41:14-20. **Thursday** Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18. **Friday** Acts 13:16-25. **Saturday** 1 Samuel 2:21-25. **Second Sunday after Epiphany** 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51.

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