

## Lectio Divina of the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus -2021

**Leader:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

**Opening Prayer:** Lord, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the precious gift of baptism that we can publicly declare our love and passion for you. We thank you for your love, that we have become your sons and daughters. We ask for your goodness and blessings to be poured out on us. We pray that you would work deeply within our heart and soul to renew and refresh us each day. May we walk forward, cleansed of sin, embraced and loved by You, Jesus our Lord and the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier. Bless us this evening as we enter to pray and meditate the Lectio Divina of this Sunday so that we may have a joyful and meaningful participation of the Sunday Liturgy.

**First Reading: A reading from the book of Prophet Isaiah Is 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. **(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God).**

**Explanation:** The phrase ‘my servant’ refers to the people of Israel in OT who were given a mission to serve God, to be custodians of His word and to be a light to the Gentile nations. Because of sin and rebellion, they failed God but God did not fail them. He saved them by sending His Son Jesus. Thus these verses of prophet Isaiah refer to Jesus Christ in the NT who is popularly known as ‘the Servant’ who had the characteristics of goodness, gentleness, encouragement, justice and truth as his hallmarks and manifesting in his public mission.

**Responsorial Psalm 29: 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.**

**Second Reading: A reading from the book of the Acts of the Apostles 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.” **(The Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God)**

**Explanation:** Peter’s brief and powerful sermon contains a concise statement of the Jesus: His baptism by John the Baptist, anointed by the Holy Spirit and revealed and recognized by the heavenly Father as His beloved Son. With the power, strength and acknowledgment by the heavenly Father, He went about doing good and healing people from physical and spiritual ailment.

**Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark 1:7-11**

This is what John the Baptist proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” **(The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ).**

**Meditation: Christmas/Epiphany/Baptism:** The Christmas season comes to an end with today’s feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. Christmas is the feast of God’s Self-revelation to the Jews. Last Sunday’s feast of the Epiphany of our Lord is the feast of God’s Self-revelation to the Gentiles. The Baptism of the Lord Jesus was a very important event in the life of Jesus himself. First, it marked the end of Jesus’ private life and the beginning of his public ministry. Second, it was a moment of identification with his people. Third, it was a moment of approval from his Heavenly Father as “His beloved Son”. Fourth, it was a moment of empowerment by the Holy Spirit to preach the good news that God is a loving Father, Who wants to save all human beings from their sins through His Son Jesus.

**What is the sacrament of baptism?** It is the sacrament of initiation being the first sacrament and giving access to the other sacraments. It cleanses us from our original sin, gives us a new birth and incorporates us into Christ and makes us the members of the church.

**What is the origin of the Baptism?** It is good to know the Origin of baptism. Neither John nor Jesus invented baptism. It had been practiced for centuries among the Jews as a ritual. It was common for Jewish people to use a special pool called a *Mikveh*, literally a "collection of water" – as a means of spiritual cleansing, to remove spiritual impurity and sin. Men took this bath weekly on the eve of the Sabbath; women, monthly. Converts were also expected to take this bath before entering Judaism. The Orthodox Jews still retain the rite. John preached that such a bath was a necessary preparation for receiving Jesus the Messiah. Jesus transformed this continuing ritual by fusing His Divine Essence with the water and the ceremony.

**Why Jesus was baptized?** On this feast we cannot avoid asking this question, **“Why did Jesus, the sinless son of God, receive the "baptism of repentance" which is meant only for sinners like us?** Jesus was baptized, because in humility and obedience, he wanted to identify himself with us the sinful humanity and thus gives us an example to follow.

**Is baptism necessary for salvation?** ‘YES’ 1. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” 2. Just before His ascension, He said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19–20). Therefore baptism is a command and ordinance of the Lord Jesus to be performed in making disciples until He returns at the end of the age. The apostles took the words of Jesus seriously and went throughout the world to preach the gospel to every creature and baptize everyone who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and this is how the church has become missionary and universal. In the line of the apostles, the early Christian community believed in baptism and the Acts of the of the Apostles has instances of baptism of individuals and households (Acts 2:38-39/ 8:38-39/16:15-33)

**Messages to be learnt from our Lord’s baptism:**

**Identity as Children of God:** The baptism of Jesus reminds us of our own identity and mission. First, it reminds us of who we are and whose we are. By Baptism we become sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of his Church, heirs of Heaven and temples of the Holy Spirit. The church beautifully and symbolically reminds us of our baptismal identity through baptismal font right in

front of the church and the holy water font by the doors. Every time we enter the church, we have to bless ourselves by dipping our right fingers into the holy water. When we bless ourselves with Holy Water, we realize that we are the children of God and the members of the church. We are redeemed, washed, forgiven, cleansed and purified by the blood of our Lord Jesus.

**Mission of the Church:** By our baptism, we participate in the holy mission of the church. The church has threefold ministry namely priestly, prophetic and shepherding. As baptized Christians, we are given this privilege of partaking in the threefold mission of the church. Today's feast is a wonderful reminder that we are the children of God which, acknowledge our own dignity as God's children, and appreciate the Divine Presence in us and others by honoring them, loving them and serving them in all humility.

**When is my baptismal day?** We know our birth day, school and college convocation, wedding day, retirement day and all the other days. How many of us do know our baptismal day and the priest who baptized us? Pope Francis says that *our baptism day is a 'blessed day' because it is a symbol of our new life in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.* Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. Remembering the day of our baptism is remembering what the Lord has done in our life with a heart of gratitude for our salvation and being inspired to take part in the life and mission of the church.

**Let us conclude our meditation with the beautiful words of St. Pope John Paul II**  
*"We were anointed with the Oil of Catechumens, the sign of Christ's gentle strength, to fight against evil. Blessed water was poured over us, an effective sign of interior purification through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We were then anointed with Chrism to show that we were thus consecrated in the image of Jesus, the Father's Anointed One. The candle lighted from the Paschal Candle was a symbol of the light of faith which our parents and godparents must have continually safeguarded and nourished with the life-giving grace of the Spirit."*

**Concluding Prayer:** Our Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You with our whole heart for the sacrament of our baptism in the body of Christ, a holy and glorious state of our life in you and in the spiritual family of all the baptized. May our baptism truly demonstrate to the world our deep communion with you and our spiritual and pastoral commitments to the church. May we be always reminded of our sacramental grace and keep up paschal light during brightly. Me we help the spiritually frozen and strayed christians to come back to you for their salvation. Fill us day by day with Your Spirit. Lead and guide us in the days that lie ahead and may we bear witness to Your Son Jesus so that we may hear your kind voice from heaven, "You are my beloved Sons/Daughters and with you I am well pleased". Amen. (Hail Mary/ Priestly Blessing)