

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7
Acts 10:34–38
Matthew 3:13–17

MONDAY

Mark 1:14–20
"The time is fulfilled . . ."

TUESDAY

Mark 1:21–28
"They were astounded at his teaching . . ."

WEDNESDAY

Mark 1:29–39
"Let us go on . . . that I may proclaim the message . . ."

THURSDAY

Mark 1: 40–45
"Be made clean!"

FRIDAY

Mark 2:1–12
"Son, your sins are forgiven."

SATURDAY

Mark 2:13–17
"Follow me."

Baptism: The Gateway

Baptism is the gateway into the Church and her sacramental life. The celebration of Jesus' Baptism at the close of the Christmas season is fitting. In this feast, we discover the link between the Incarnation and the Redemption in the person of Jesus.

While all three synoptic Gospels reveal an account of Jesus' baptism, it is noteworthy to reflect on the emphasis in the Matthean baptismal account. Namely that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scripture's prophetic promise. Jesus being the



fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures is underscored throughout the Gospel of Matthew. This passage is no exception.

Jesus comes to John specifically for baptism. In the discussion of who needs baptism, John recognizes Jesus as the sinless servant. But Jesus is emphatic about his desire for baptism to "fulfill" God's will. Jesus' intention is more than simply to obey God's will. It is to *fulfill* the will of God proclaimed by the prophets. Furthermore, in this action, Jesus embraces sinners, taking upon himself the burden of sin. The fullness of the Incarnation is revealed in this moment of baptism in that Jesus shares our lot as a sinful people.

Baptism, for Jesus, marks the inauguration of his public ministry. It is the gateway for him to bring about the kingdom described in the first reading from Isaiah. Jesus is the servant who will bring forth justice and who will remain a light for all the nations.



The Faith of the Church

Baptism marks a new beginning, through which we are reborn in the Holy Spirit as children of God. We are drawn into the life of Christ, set free from sin, and we share in the same mission that Jesus set forth for us. Thus, we are made whole and graced by God to live a new life through the sacramental power of baptism (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1213).



Questions of the Week

In today's Gospel there is an emphasis on the theophany that reveals Jesus as the favored Son of God. Anointed by the Spirit, he is to begin his mission of peace and justice as described by the prophets.

Adults

In what ways has the Holy Spirit helped me bring peace and justice into my world?

Children

What can I do this week to bring peace into my family?

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com (click on "Gospel Reflections") and share today's Gospel reading as a family.

Responding to God's Word . . .

We, who are baptized, have the pledge and assurance that God has come to take up our burdens. We are not alone. The revelation of Jesus' beloved Sonship is echoed through the ages for us. His anointing under the power of the Spirit becomes our graced life under the same Spirit. The Incarnation reveals Jesus' sweeping embrace of all humanity and immerses us into a life empowered for mission and service to all peoples.

We need only look at the Isaiah passage set before us today to uncover this mission. The servant set before us represents Israel's mission

to be a light to the nations. Jesus describes that mission in the language of God's kingdom where justice and peace reign. The kingdom will come about through non-violent means ("a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.")

That mission is now shared by the Church. The seeds were implanted in each of us through baptism. We are empowered to carry it out through the anointing grace of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is the gateway into a lifelong commitment of bringing forth the kingdom through faith, hope, and love.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Take out photos of family baptisms to initiate a conversation about the meaning of Baptism as a gateway to the Christ-like life.

In the workplace or in school. Encourage the settling of disagreements through peaceful discussions rather than heated arguments. Don't add fuel to the fire by taking sides.

In the community. Become involved in your parish RCIA process as a sponsor, godparent, or team member.



Meditation Moment

Old Testament writers called someone a "son of God" much as we call a good person an "angel." In other words, they used the title in a figurative sense. Thus, they called kings "sons of God." New Testament writers, on the other hand, reserved the title for Jesus. They used it in a literal sense because that is how they experienced Jesus: "as the Father's only Son" (John 1:14).

For reflection . . .

What convinces me most that Jesus is "the Father's only Son"?

THE SON OF GOD DIED;
IT IS BY ALL MEANS TO BE BELIEVED
BECAUSE IT IS ABSURD.
AND HE WAS BURIED AND ROSE AGAIN;
IT IS CERTAIN BECAUSE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE.
TERTULLIAN (CA. A.D. 200)

FROM VISION BY MARK LINK, SJ

Gentle Whisper: Voice of God

Release us from
harsh words and hateful
thoughts; Gentle our souls and
minds; Refresh us to love all peoples.
Rushing Water, Christ our Life: Free us
from the chains of sin; Cleanse us from
our faults; Open us to this our baptismal
call. Windswept Dove: Hovering Spirit
of love: Plant the seeds of justice
in our hearts; Guide us in the
path of peace; Grace us with
our baptismal gifts.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your
heart as a guide for your faith
journey this week.

"I am the Lord, I
have called you in
righteousness, I have
taken you by the hand . . ."

Isaiah 42:6

Profile in Faith

The North American Forum on the Catechumenate has served as an international network of Catholic ministers and scholars dedicated to the full implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). Key elements of the RCIA process include evangelization, conversion, liturgy, catechesis, discipleship, justice, and mission.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Msgr. Robert M. Coerver, Censor Librorum
IMPRIMATUR
† Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, DD, Bishop of Dallas
October 1, 2010

The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that the material reviewed is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those granting the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

Author: Carol A. Gura

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Front photo: iStockphoto

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright 1989, 1993, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 2011 RCL Publishing LLC. All rights reserved.

The Faith Connection® is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and is published weekly by RCL Benziger, 206 E. Bethany Dr., Allen, TX 75002.

877-275-4725

Contact us at RCLBenziger.com

