



# Baptism of Jesus

## Catechist Background Information

★ MATTHEW 3:4-17, MARK 1:4-11,

LUKE 3:7-22, JOHN 1:19-34

★ LECTIONARY: SUNDAY AFTER JANUARY 6,  
YEARS A, B, C

★ SEE ALSO ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
(CARD 158)

★ CATECHISM 232, 535-537



While cameras click away, the astronauts smile and wave excitedly as they walk to the launch pad. With all the world watching and praying for their safety and success, they embark on a breathtaking and dangerous mission. More than 2,000 years ago in the desert of Judea Jesus launched a mission that was to affect every human being. No reporters were there to record the historic event. Jesus was just one in a crowd gathered to be baptized by John the Baptist.

John, who is known as the greatest prophet, preached repentance. He called people to turn their hearts away from sin. As a sign of their repentance, his listeners were baptized in the Jordan River, a long, winding river flowing south from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. A relative of Jesus, John was called to prepare the way for him. John announced that one would be coming after him whose baptism would not be with water as his was but with fire and the Spirit. He, John, was not even worthy to untie the straps of this man's sandals, which was the task of a slave.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, on the day Jesus asked John for baptism, John protested, insisting that he himself should be baptized by Jesus. Why should Jesus who was sinless undergo a ceremony for sinners? When Jesus pointed out that his baptism was God's will, John agreed to it. By being baptized, Jesus identified himself with sinners. His baptism was not an admission of sin but an acceptance of the human condition. Going down into the water symbolized the death humanity deserved for sins.

9

Scripture says that after Jesus came up from the waters, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came down upon him. The Spirit who overshadowed Mary at Jesus' conception and who anointed the Church for its mission on Pentecost was present at Jesus' baptism. When we are baptized, this same Spirit comes to dwell in us.

Then at Jesus' baptism the Father's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). At our baptism we become the sons and daughters of God, the Father of Jesus.

The synoptic Gospels reveal the Trinity at Jesus' baptism. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove were all present. This revelation of God is called an epiphany (manifestation) or a theophany (manifestation of God). From apostolic times the Trinity has been named in the formula for Christian baptism: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The baptism of Jesus was a sign of his willingness to identify with sinful humanity. It was also a sign of his acceptance of his mission as Messiah, the Christ, a title that means "anointed one." Strengthened by the Father and anointed by the Spirit, Jesus would proclaim and make present the kingdom of God on earth. According to God's plan, through his death and resurrection Jesus would save the world.

The Latin Church celebrates the baptism of Jesus on the First Sunday of the Year in Ordinary Time. This is the first Sunday after the Feast of the Epiphany. Eastern Churches celebrate this mystery on the Epiphany.

**GLORY TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT  
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND WILL BE FOREVER. AMEN!**

READ Luke 3:10-14. What might John say to people today? to politicians, entertainers, computer programmers, etc.?	SUPPOSE you were to begin a new mission today that could have a great impact on the world. What would your mission be? Would you call a big press conference to	announce it? Or would you quietly start doing it with the quiet trust that if it is of God it will catch on and spread? Or would you do something else?
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