

Missionary Commentary

The Baptism of the Lord
January 12, 2025

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10
Acts 10:34-38
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Baptized for Service and Mission

Today the Church celebrates the Baptism of Jesus; it is given much importance in the Gospels, recorded by all three synoptic evangelists. Questions may arise about the need for Jesus to be baptized. However, the “necessity” question is *not* the focus of the Gospel writers.

Baptism—Why? The fundamental interpretation of Jesus’ baptism is that it is the formal approval and commissioning by the Father of his beloved Son Jesus for his public ministry. Jesus experiences his call to mission; he is grasped and affirmed by the Spirit of God coming upon him. He is recognized as God’s chosen servant and Son. The public ministry of Jesus begins; he calls people to faith.

In our baptism *all Christians* have received the marvelous gift of faith through the Holy Spirit. Genuine faith is active and dynamic, always manifested in “mission” responses. If our faith-commitment is a bit half-hearted, let us renew *today* our baptismal mission to spread faith in Jesus, joining him in his faith-filled mission commitment.

Liturgical Transition. Today’s feast signals the end of the “Christmas season” and the beginning of “ordinary time,” when we reflect on the mystery of Christ’s Incarnation and its relationship to our own daily life and mission. “Ordinary Time” appears so common, humdrum, and routine; it implies the uneventful, the “nothing special” season of the year. It begins so abruptly—after about three weeks of intense “Christmas” celebrations. “Ordinary Time” has now arrived. No more special feasts or celebrations; we settle into regular, daily life—yes, into the ordinary.

Redeeming the Ordinary. There is a profound connection between the major feasts of the Christmas season and ordinary, daily life. Because of Christ’s coming, no time is ordinary; all time takes on new meaning and significance. Seemingly ordinary daily existence has been profoundly transformed; it has become Christic, renewed by Christ’s birth. Indeed, for reflective Christians, *no time is simply ordinary* in the sense of lacking profound importance; every day is a day of salvation, a day of living into Christ’s life.

We realize that our lives—life itself—are filled with routine, repetitive, monotonous, ordinary activities. Herein lies our vocation and mission, our spirituality and sanctification, the meaning of our baptism. In short, we are called to be “*saints of the ordinary*.” We, as baptized Christians, are called to walk the unspectacular path to sanctity—imitating Jesus and his mission.

Pathway to Holiness. Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta has said: “We cannot do great things; we can only do ordinary things with great love.” Thérèse of Lisieux, the saint of the “little way,” developed a spirituality of ordinariness in which one offers each moment very simply to God. The Holy Family itself lived thirty years, mostly in

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Nazareth, in simplicity, hiddenness, and obscurity. We sincerely thank God for our parents, “true saints of the ordinary.”

Honestly, I like feasts and celebrations; I also appreciate “ordinary time” very much; that is where I feel comfortable. It is precisely through the ordinary that all of us can hope to reach that sublime goal: *becoming “ordinary” saints!*

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 — Today’s reading from Isaiah foreshadows the mission of Jesus as God’s servant, bringing justice for the nations, becoming light for the peoples, opening the eyes of the blind, and setting those in confinement free.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10 — This psalm speaks of the voice of the Lord over the waters, a mighty voice, a voice that brings the Lord’s peace for all peoples.

Second Reading

Acts 10:34-38 — Here we see Peter, preaching to a non-Jewish audience, proclaiming that God has extended his salvation to everyone, because “God shows no partiality.” In Jesus God’s love is universally available.

Gospel

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22 — Interestingly, Luke, the evangelist of current “Year C,” does not describe Jesus’ baptism. Luke places more emphasis on the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus. As the year unfolds, we will see how Jesus’ Spirit-filled ministry unfolds in many, multifaceted events.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).

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