

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD January 12, 2025

THEMES FOR THE DAY AND SEASON

Today's festival rejoices in God's blessings. We recall and celebrate our adoption as God's children, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promised company of almighty God when we "pass through the waters . . . the rivers . . . fire." On this day the heavens open again for this assembly, and we receive the gift of God's Beloved, Jesus, in bread and wine (From Sundays and Seasons)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed him as your beloved Son. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful in your service, that we may rejoice to be called children of God, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

GOSPEL Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

15 As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

21 Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

SERMON - Words from Rev. John Snow in A Vocation to Risk

“When at the baptism of Jesus, God spoke and said ‘this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased’ God was speaking to humanity. God was saying, ‘if you want to know who I am and what reality is, if you want to understand what I have created and why, and why I have created you, look very closely at the piece of history this baptism begins. This is the most complete answer you are going to get to these questions.

‘Look closely at this Jewish peasant standing in this dirty little creek. Keep your eyes on this man and listen to what he says. Watch how he deals with the people around him and with the creation within which he moves.

See how he addresses the sick, the crippled, the blind and the deaf. See how he relates to outcasts and sinners. Listen to what he has to say to his enemies, his persecutors, and to the religious and secular authorities.

See how he uses his time; what is important to him and what is unimportant to him. Watch him at weddings and funerals. See how he loves and cares about children. Pay attention to how he treats women and how quickly they understand who he is.

“Consider his attitudes towards the use of force and violence. Notice his courage when he is afraid. Notice there are things that make him angry and pay attention to what they are. Notice how at home he is in the world and how he acts as if he has a right to be here and how he enjoys being here.

“Notice his generosity of spirit and hospitality and how he likes to feed and welcome anyone who comes along. And pay attention to how he dies, how his fear of pain and death do not stop his expression of love and concern for his friends and family. How alert the pain of his neighbour in his own pain. How he meets death itself as a completion and perfection and not as bad luck or a dirty trick.

“But above all continue to pay attention to when he dies. Watch as he is taken down from the cross and washed and wrapped in grave cloths by the women who put him in his tomb, and notice a bit later that the tomb is empty. And notice how much this person, my beloved child, is like you’.”

A Vocation to Risk, John Snow (1992) Boston and Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications pages 29-30.