



BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7–13
LECTIONARY 1

FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1-5

A reading from Genesis.

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,
²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,
while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.
³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.
⁴And God saw that the light was good;
and God separated the light from the darkness.
⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 29

SECOND READING: Acts 19:1-7

A reading from Acts.

¹While Apollos was in Corinth,
Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus,
where he found some disciples.
²He said to them,
“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?”
They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”
³Then he said, “Into what then were you baptized?”
They answered, “Into John’s baptism.”
⁴Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance,
telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him,
that is, in Jesus.”
⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ▶

FIRST READING

At first glance one might wonder, “Why this text on the Baptism of Our Lord?” It is a good question. The answer is found in the words “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” In Hebrew the word for wind also means breath and spirit. This is crucial knowledge for the reader in that the whole point of the reading is that the Holy Spirit of God was “on the move” from the very beginning. It is this same Spirit who will move those who in the second reading are baptized by Paul, who moved through Jesus’ words and deeds—and will move us as we hear the word.

SECOND READING *Ephesus = EF-uh-sus prophesied = PROF-uh-sighed*

The story makes the point that the Spirit of God works mightily among those touched by that Spirit. ▶

⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them,
and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—
⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

GOSPEL: Mark 1:4-11

The holy gospel according to Mark.

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside
and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him,
and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.
⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair,
with a leather belt around his waist,
and he ate locusts and wild honey.
⁷He proclaimed,
"The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me;
I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.
⁸I have baptized you with water;
but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee
and was baptized by John in the Jordan.
¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water,
he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.
¹¹And a voice came from heaven,
"You are my Son, the Beloved;
with you I am well pleased."

The gospel of the Lord.

It is a simple story. The reader will want to share it in a straightforward way. Recognize that the climax of the story comes in verse 6 with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the observation that "they spoke in tongues and prophesied." Let the reading help the hearer share in the wonder and power of that moment.

GOSPEL

This is a "two-tone" reading. Verses 4-8 introduce John the Baptist and the people's reaction to him. These verses are looking for an expansive voice. A significant pause after verse 8 will allow for a change in tone for the concluding verses. A more subdued reporting of the events surrounding the baptism of Jesus may provide an intriguing contrast to the astonishing nature of the vision and the voice.