

The Baptism of the Lord (Sunday 10th January 2021)

Today, on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we learn that God the Father blesses his “Beloved”, his Son Jesus, who, with the Holy Spirit, will bring healing and peace to the whole world.

Isaiah 55:1-11

People who thirst are invited to “come to the water”.

1 John 5:1-9

Christian life requires both faith in Jesus and love of other people.

Mark 1:7-11

Mark’s Gospel starts with the “good news” of Jesus’ baptism at the beginning of his ministry.



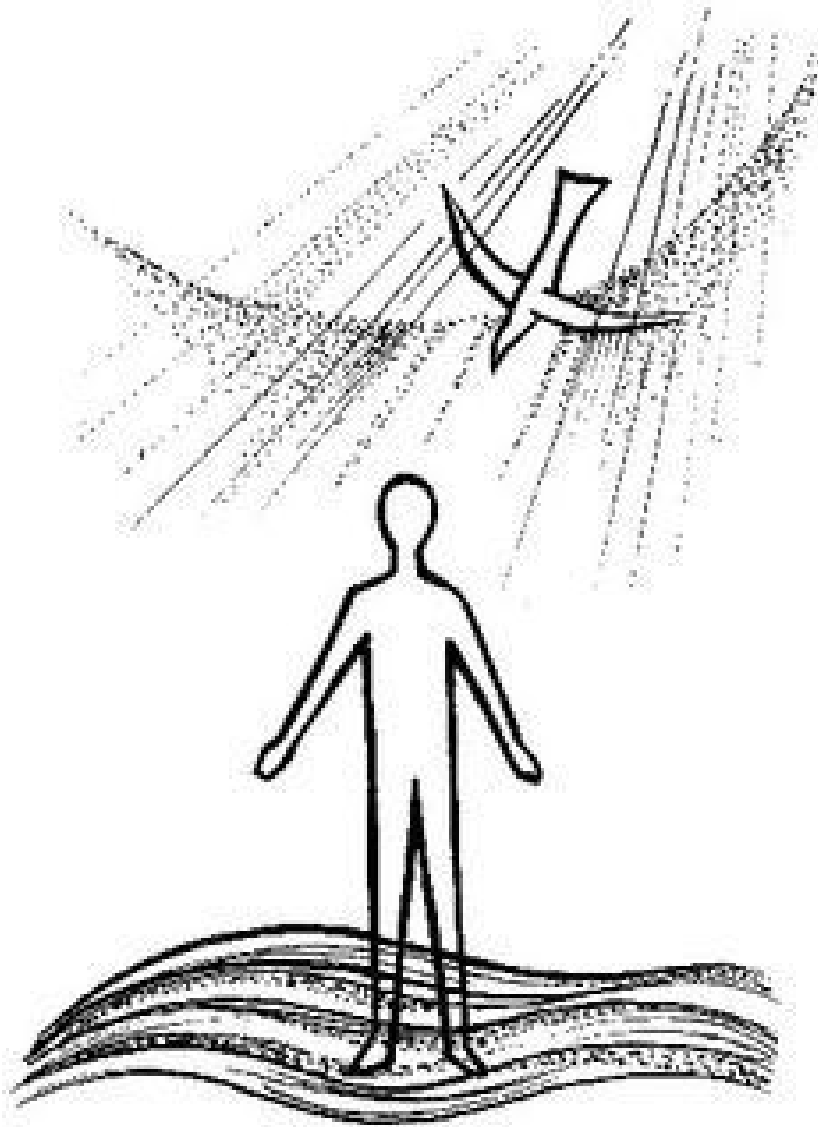
"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" .

The baptism of Jesus is another "epiphany," or divine manifestation. The word baptism comes from a Greek word *baptizo*, which means to plunge, or to be submerged in water. Christian baptism is very different from Jewish ritual washings or cleansings, which were self-administered and could be repeated many times. Christian baptism is administered by another person and happens only once in a lifetime. At the heart of Christian baptism is dying to one way of living and then rising to a whole new way of life.

In baptism, the elect are plunged into the death and resurrection of Christ (Ro 6:3-5). By submitting to baptism Jesus embraced our full humanity. God's beloved Son sanctified the foul waters of our sinfulness by his divine presence (2 Cor 5:21). Just as God's favour rested on Jesus, all God's children are beloved sons and daughters.



"YOU ARE MY SON, THE BELOVED. MY FAVOUR RESTS ON YOU."

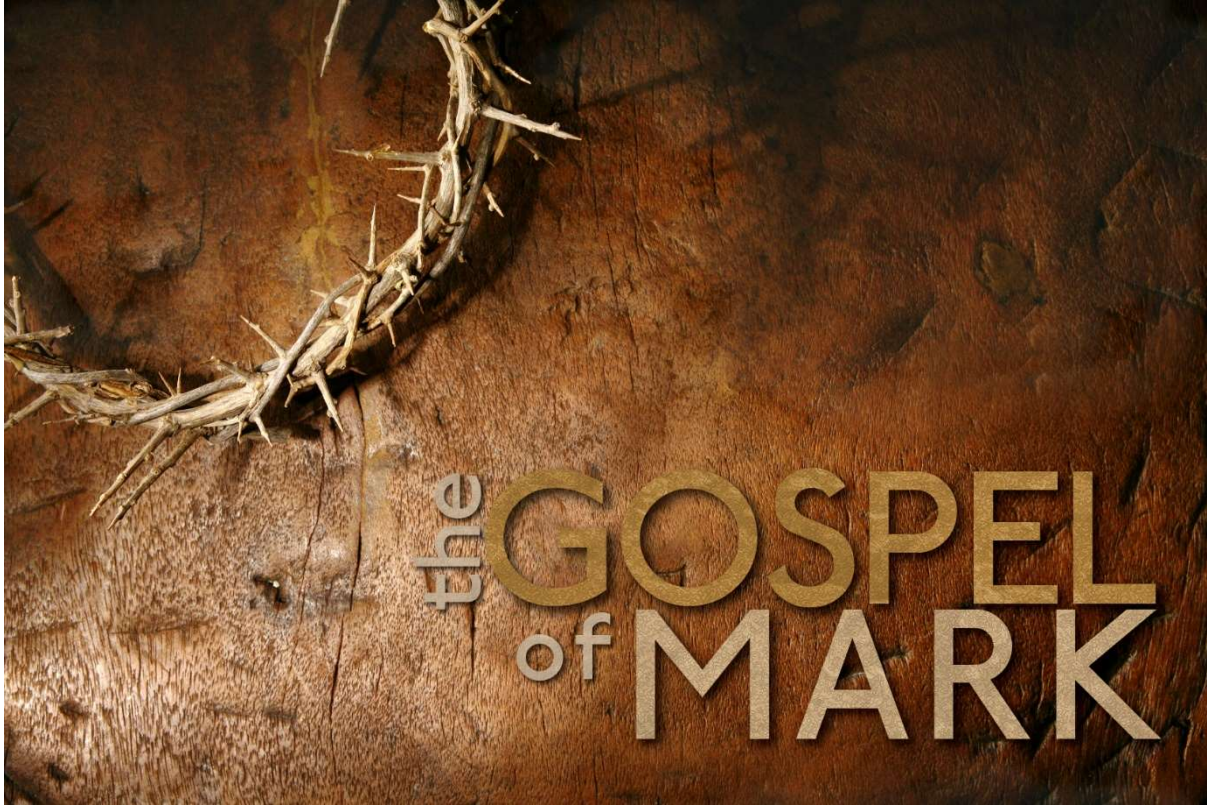


The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord brings the Christmas season to an end.

Baptism forgives all sin and incorporates you into the life of the Trinity. Believers are given a share in the divine nature. In addition, baptism makes you a member of the Body of Christ and of the visible manifestation of that body, the Church, and provides for us a share in the mission of Jesus. Water is the main symbolic element that conveys the sacrament of baptism, along with the words, "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." That triple plunging or immersing in the water symbolizes dying to your old self. Coming up out of the water corresponds to being born as a new person in Christ (Catechism of the Catholic Church par. 1239-40).

Tomorrow (Monday) we begin Ordinary Time (Week 1 in the Lectionary)

This is the year of **MARK'S** Gospel.



The plan of Mark's Gospel

Mark was the first to undertake the writing of a Gospel which set out the miracles and teachings of Jesus against the backdrop of his life story.

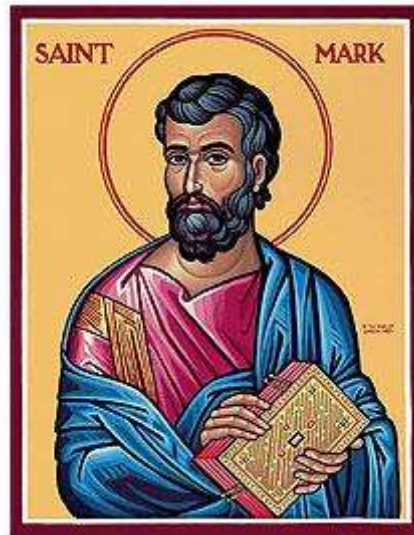
The basic narrative structure followed by Mark is one that was later followed later by Matthew (85 AD) and by Luke (90 AD). Mark's plan of the Gospel is as follows:

- The Prologue (Mark 1:1-13)
- The Proclamation of the Kingdom in Galilee (1:14 — 8:30)
- The Journey to Jerusalem (8:31-10:52)
- The Jerusalem Ministry (11:1—13:37)
- The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus (14:1—16:20)

Each of these sections of the Gospel has got its own function and, as you read your way through them in the course of this year (Year B), you will see how they work. But note one thing immediately. Mark hasn't got an account of the birth of Jesus. He hasn't got any resurrection appearances of Jesus. He **has** got

some appearances of the Risen Christ, but they've probably been added to Mark's Gospel by another later hand.

This means that during the Christmas and Easter Seasons of Year B, the liturgy draws on the other Gospels.



Mark's persistent question is: **“Who is he?”**

The Gospel is dominated by the question of the identity of Jesus. From the very beginning Mark proclaims him as: **“Jesus the Messiah the Son of God”** (Mk 1:1). Twice God the Father himself identifies Jesus as his own Beloved Son (Mk 1:11; 9:7). As we read through the Gospel we find people struggling with this question of his identity (Mk 2:7; 4:41; 6:2-3; 8:27; 11:28). Yet evil spirits seem to be able to identify him easily (Mk 1:24.34; 3:11; 5:7-8). Peter seems to identify Jesus correctly as the Messiah (Mk 8:29). However, Peter is thinking in terms of a powerful and glorious Messiah, while Jesus is talking about God's Suffering Servant (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34.45). Jesus' identity dominates his religious and political trials. At his religious trial the High Priest asks him, **“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”** (Mk 14:61). When Jesus says “yes,” he is condemned to death.

At his political trial, Pontius Pilate also questions him about his identity — **“Are you the King of the Jews?”** (Mk 15:2). There is only one person in the whole Gospel who correctly identifies Jesus and he is neither a believer nor Jewish. He is the unnamed Centurion at Calvary who, when seeing the manner in which Jesus dies, confesses, **“Truly this man was God's Son!”** (Mk 15:39).

Mark has written this Gospel for us and tells us about Jesus so that when we ask the question **“Who is he?”** you will answer:

“He is Jesus, the Messiah, God's Son and Suffering Servant!”

