



## THE SYNOD

*See below*

### The Baptism of the Lord

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It's **the last day** of the Christmas season, but the readings herald **the start** of Jesus' ministry as an adult.



#### Today's Readings

##### **Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

The prophet consoles God's people who are in exile in Babylon.

##### **Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7**

The writer tells us that God has saved us by the cleansing water of rebirth.

##### **Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

At his baptism, Jesus hears the voice of God his Father: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."

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

Throughout Jewish history, it was traditional for Jews to demonstrate repentance through washing ceremonies. John the Baptist was preaching repentance for the coming of God's reign. His baptism may have been related to

the purifying washings of the Essenes at Qumran near the Dead Sea. (It is possible that John may have been a member of this community).

The people were filled with expectations of the Messiah, and they wondered if John was God's anointed one. John answered that his baptism was only a preparation for "one mightier" who would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and fire". Although Jesus had no need for repentance, he entered the murky waters where the people had been baptized, thereby uniting himself with sinful humanity. [The baptism of Jesus was another "epiphany," or manifestation of the divine presence – together with the manifestation to the Kings or Wise Men and the first miracle at Cana in Galilee].

While Jesus was praying, the Spirit descended upon him, and God's voice was heard confirming Jesus as the "beloved Son". On Calvary, Jesus would undergo a baptism of fire that would bring salvation to the whole world. This transforming fire would be poured out on the Church at Pentecost.

***"While Jesus, after his own baptism, was at prayer, heaven opened."***



It may seem strange, but this is a **Christmas Feast**. It is, perhaps, a bit strange if we think of Christmas only in terms of the Baby in Bethlehem; but if we have followed the Church through the Feasts of Holy Family and especially The Epiphany, we will have seen the Christmas Season in terms of the growing **manifestation or appearing** of the Son of God: **first** to the (Jewish) shepherds and **then** to the (Foreign) wise men from the East. Now in the River Jordan, Jesus, Son of Mary, is revealed to everyone as the fullness of all God's promises: **This is my Son, the Beloved .**

On this day, we stand before the revelation of a God who loved us so much that he sent his only Son into the world. Christmas without the Baptism of the Lord, and the words that are spoken from heaven, would be incomplete, since it is only in that happening and those words that we fully see the wonder of what took place in Bethlehem. As we come to the end of Christmas today, and look forward to hearing the Gospels (Luke's Gospel this year) in Ordinary Time, we do so having been shown who it is we listen to: the only Son of God, the Beloved.

*The word **baptism** comes from a Greek word (*baptisma*), which means to become submerged in water. In baptism, the 'elect' is immersed into the death and resurrection of Christ. At the heart of Christian baptism is dying to one way of living and then rising to a whole new way of life.*

### **ORDINARY TIME** (*Time measured by ordinals or numbers*)

Tomorrow (Monday) we begin what's called "Ordinary Time". It's called "ordinary" because the weeks are numbered. The Latin word ordinalis, which refers to numbers in a series, stems from the Latin word ordo, from which we get the English word order. Thus, Ordinary Time is in fact the ordered life of the Church—the period in which we live our lives neither in feasting (as in the Christmas and Easter seasons) or in more severe penance (as in Advent or Lent), but in watchfulness and expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. There are two periods of Ordinary Time: now (after Christmas) and then (a longer period) after Easter and Pentecost. The total number of weeks of Ordinary Time in any given year is 33 or 34.



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

## SYNOD.



During the coming year you will be hearing a lot about the word “**Synod**”. It simply means “walking together”. The Synodal Pathway is a listening journey. Started by the Pope, it is taking place all over the Catholic world. Synodality means ‘walking together’: listening and reflecting to discern what the Spirit is prompting us to do. The synodal experience is listening to God through listening to each other.

How will we as a parish become engaged in the process? We want to hear from **EVERYONE** – including those on the periphery of the Church. We hope to reach out to people who no longer attend Mass, to people in irregular marriages, to the divorced, to the gay and to anyone who feels excluded in any way; we want to listen even to our so-called enemies. We need to listen to feelings and emotions more than to learned speeches. We need to listen to the people who don't have a voice in the Church.



The Synodal Pathway is a process of spiritual discernment that unfolds in prayer and in dialogue with the word of God. We should ponder, prayerfully, what we see to be the future face of the Catholic Church.

**Let's walk together.**

### GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

T	N	A	E	D	V	O	I	E	C
S	I	D	R	O	J	F	A	R	A
U	D	R	O	J	I	R	N	T	S
E	M	S	I	T	P	A	B	A	S
S	C	S	T	P	D	T	A	W	D
E	E	I	U	R	S	D	A	W	N
J	N	N	O	S	O	T	N	H	A
G	O	J	I	V	E	M	O	O	M
T	O	H	E	R	E	J	E	J	E
E	S	N	E	V	A	E	H	E	D

JESUS            JORDAN            JOHN  
BAPTISM        FITTING        DEMANDS  
WATER            HEAVENS        SPIRIT  
DOVE            VOICE            SON

A cartoon illustration of Jesus and John the Baptist standing together, with a speech bubble above them.