**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer**

**Jan. 10, 2021—The Baptism of the Lord**

*All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!*

*(Is 55:1)*

**CHECK-IN… and then mute everyone. (Suzie De Quattro and Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Richard McGinnis)**

Welcome, everyone!

* I am Richard McGinnis and I prepared today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in reflection questions and prayer today: Jim DeQuattro, Lynn Bufka, Susan Harford, Mary Ann Dolan, Marilyn Voight, Sylvia Lynch, Gail DeGeorge, Charlotte Cook, Mary Ott and Linda Donaldson.

**SETTLING IN (Richard)**

Let’s begin in stillness. I invite you to settle into a comfortable position. Relax your body. Start with the top of your head and move to your toes-body part by body part. (Pause.) As you let go of physical tension in your body, empty your mind of distracting thoughts. Listen to your breathing as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Now, let’s take a deep, cleansing breath together. As you inhale, let the Spirit settle deeply into you. As you exhale, release tensions from your body and distractions from your mind. (Pause.) And now let’s take 3 more breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to create space for God.

Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration with the hymn—“Christ, Be Our Light.”

**OPENING SONG: “Christ, Be Our Light” (Stu Sklamm)**

Verse 1

Longing for light, we wait in darkness,

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people, Refrain

Light for the world to see. *Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine in the darkness.*

*Christ be our light!*

*Shine in your church gathered today.*

Verse 3

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,

Shared until all are fed. Refrain

Verse 5

Many the gifts, many the people,

many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,

Making your kingdom come. Refrain

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Richard)**

Beloved Community, we come together because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us and has sent the Spirit to guide us in response to the divine call to love one another. We gather during a week that has stretched us mightily in response to that call. The events of the past week are very much on our minds, as they should be. I invite you to use this time together to let God speak to us in ageless ways, to give ourselves a very big context for knowing who we are and how we are to be in this time of tumult and change. As we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord, I invite you to honor what our Baptisms tell us about who we are and how we are to be, in this moment and in all moments.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Richard) (Betty: Slide 1)**



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In the first reading for today, we see God calling Isaiah to be a light to those in darkness, and to provide gentle care to the vulnerable. God places his Spirit on Isaiah and is pleased by his bringing justice to the nations.

In the next reading from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus demonstrates publicly the beginning of his ministry of redemption by having John baptize him in the Jordan river. As with Isaiah, God sends his Spirit, and he announces from heaven his love for and approval of his son.

As we stand on the shore of our own Jordan River and reflect on the call that God has for each of us, Scripture provides us with some valuable wisdom.

Perhaps most importantly, we are precious in the sight of God, and we will never be alone in responding to God’s call--but accompanied always by the Spirit.

We know that when the currents of chaos and division in the world are strong and try to pull us off balance – as they are today – we can rely on the flow of God’s love to remain immersed in the Spirit and become witnesses of mercy to a thirsty people.

Although we are all called to do God’s work in our daily lives, the call is not the same for everyone.

As we learn from the Apostle Paul, each of us is entrusted with Spiritual gifts, but no one possesses all.

God has a plan for us, but, like John, we are not the Messiah.

We will stumble along the way, and we will fall.

But, we are liberated by the knowledge that we are enfolded by a forgiveness that emanates from a divine love that is beyond our comprehension.

So, we are free to consider the gifts with which we have been blessed for sharing the love of God--without worry for what is beyond our reach or fear of falling short.

In the liturgy for today, we hear the divine invitation: “Come to the waters.”

Your response will be a cause for joy.

After each reading, Jim DeQuattro will offer questions before we pause for silent reflection. You are free to stay with whatever question or portion of the readings that appeal to you.

And, now Lynn Bufka will read from Isaiah.

**READING 1 – (Lynn Bufka) (Betty: Slide 2)**

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The Prophet Isaiah, Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/The\_Prophet\_Isaiah\_MET\_ES387.jpg

Image URL--https://bibleencyclopedia.com/nasb/NASB\_Isaiah\_42-7.jpg

Isaiah 55, verse 1

All you who are thirsty, come to the waters!

**(PAUSE)**

Isaiah 42:verses 1,4, 6, and 7

Thus says the LORD:
Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,
upon whom I have put my spirit;
he shall bring forth justice to the nations,…

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes of the blind,

to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**   **(Jim DeQuattro)**

What person or organization has opened your eyes to the dignity and needs of vulnerable people?

For what are you thirsting?

What signs of justice do you see around you?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty: Slide 3, time, chime, stop slide)**

**Richard:** Now Susan Harford will read from the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark. **(Betty: #4)**

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Image URL--https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baptism\_of\_Jesus.\_Stained-glass\_window\_at\_Church\_of\_Our\_Savior\_MCC,\_Boynton\_Beach,\_FL.jpg

**READING 2 –** MK 1:7-11 **(Susan Harford)**

This is what John the Baptist proclaimed:
“One mightier than I is coming after me.
I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.
I have baptized you with water;
he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee
and was baptized in the Jordan by John.
On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open
and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him.
And a voice came from the heavens,
“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**   **(Jim)**

In what ways, either expected or unexpected, did a call to serve God’s people come to you?

In what ways have your communities helped you in discerning and pursuing a call?

What surprised you once you responded to a call?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty: Slide 5, time, chime, stop slide) **

**Richard:**  Now Mary Ann Dolan will read excerpts from a homily by Fr. Martin Hogan of St. John the Baptist parish, Dublin.

**READING 3 –**   **(Mary Ann Dolan)**

**The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord**

With the feast of the baptism of the Lord, ..Jesus…steps into the river Jordan to be baptized by John and to begin his public ministry…. As he does so he experiences the coming of the Holy Spirit and he hears God say to him, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.’

…Unlike Jesus, most of us came to the waters of baptism as children not as adults… Yet our own baptism was similar to the baptism of Jesus in one fundamental way. Like him, we too at the moment of our baptism were filled with God’s Spirit and were given the same assurance of God’s favour….

Now, as adults, we have the opportunity to really receive that Spirit of God and to allow those words of favour to sink into us and to recreate us. Yet, it is because we are adults that we can find it so hard to receive his Spirit and to hear those words. We have lived enough of life to realize that we are not all we could be; we are aware of our imperfections and our inadequacies. We may have got to a point where we find it hard to love ourselves.…

We assume those words are intended for others, not for …[us]. Yet, God addresses those words to each of us personally. St. Paul, who did not have a perfect past, knew that better than most. In one of the most marvelous statements in the New Testament, he said to the Christians of Rome, ‘Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

…The reality of Paul’s baptism was alive to him every day of his life. Today, the feast of the baptism of the Lord, is a day to pray that our own personal baptism would come alive for each of us. In response to God’s continued gift of the Holy Spirit to us, we pray ‘Come Holy Spirit, fill my heart and enkindle in me the fire of your love’. In response to God’s word to us today, ‘You are my beloved; my favour rests on you’, we pray, ‘Let this word penetrate my being and fill me with new life’.   It was in the power of this Spirit and this word that Jesus began his public ministry. It is in the power of that same Spirit and that same word that each of us will be able to set out on whatever journey the Lord is calling us to make at this time.

In the first reading, God says to the prophet, ‘I have made of you a witness to the people’. But before he spoke that word of mission.., God said to him, ‘Come to the water… pay attention, come to me’. The prophet is invited to receive before he is sent to minister. So it was for Jesus, and so it is for each of us. We need first to hear the call of God to come and drink, to drink of his Spirit and of his favour. Only then can we do what he is asking of us;… only then can we really share in his Son’s mission in the world.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**   **(Jim)**

What restores your sense of the reality of God’s great love?

In what have you seen the active work of the Holy Spirit?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty: Slide 6, time, chime, stop slide)**

**MUSICAL MEDITATION: (Richard)**

Let’s sink into the water for a minute, as we listen to a portion of the song “Down In The River To Pray “, followed by a shorter period of silence to as we prepare to share our reflections.

**SONG:** Down In the River to Pray  **(Betty:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-poUcvRGUE&t=229s> – start at 00:00 and end at 1:01**)**

**PAUSE:** About 30 seconds **(Richard)**

**INTRODUCTION TO SHARING: (Richard)**

Now, Marilyn Voight will lead us in sharing.

**SHARING TIME (Marilyn Voight)**

We invite you to share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on the readings. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

(Sharing)

[If there is a long pause before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet time that you need before you speak.

[If there is an extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share? [Pause.]

11:20 AM – It’s time to bring our spoken sharing to an end. For anyone who would still like to share, jot down a word or phrase now so that, after our final blessing, you can mention it or add it in Chat for Betty to send out later.

Thank you.

Now, let us pause to gather the prayers arising in us.

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Sylvia Lynch)**

Mindful of God’s mercy and powerful, transforming love, let us pray humbly for ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and for the needs of the whole world. Please end each intention with “…For this, we pray.” Our response will be, “Loving God, hear our prayer.”

In the name of Jesus, we ask mercy for the poor, the cold and the hungry; the unemployed and the homeless; the alien and those in prison; the exploited, the abused and the oppressed; the sick in body and the troubled in mind; the addicted and the disabled; those who mourn; the little children and the elderly; the isolated, the lonely and the unloved; and all who do not know or do not love God. For this we pray. Loving God, hear our prayer.

God of infinite patience, we pray today for our country in this time of crisis.  Raise up leaders who speak truth, citizens who seek the common good, prophets who call us to justice and equality, and many people able to build a more perfect union.  Comfort us in our suffering and open our hearts to embrace all whom you love.  For this we pray. Loving God, hear our prayer.

For growing awareness of the love of God and the presence of the Spirit with which we are blessed. For this we pray. Loving God, hear our prayer.

In thanksgiving for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the work of women religious throughout the world who shine a light in the dark lives of vulnerable people. For this we pray. Loving God, hear our prayer.

For what else shall we pray?

[When prayers become less frequent.] **Sylvia:** Would anyone else like to offer a prayer?

**Sylvia:** Thank you. O God, we will do all we can to make our prayers real, and we entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Gail DeGeorge)**

The readings invite us to listen for the call of God, to immerse ourselves so as to receive the Spirit, and to tend to the needs of the vulnerable. Mindful that we are a part of the body of Christ through Baptism, let us dip our fingers into the vessel of water that we have brought with us and consider what Baptismal promises we make today. (Pause for 30 seconds.)

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray.

God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so we that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Charlotte Cook)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in the world. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence. Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Mary Ott)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

**All (muted):** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**BLESSING**  (From Col 3:12-17) **(Linda Donaldson)**

Let us extend our hands over each other and bless each other in Paul’s words to the Colossians:

Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,
bearing with one another and forgiving one another.
And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one body.
And be thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

**CLOSING SONG: “I’ve Got Peace like a River” (Reggie Ott)**

I’ve got peace like river;

I’ve got peace like a river;

I’ve got peace like a river, in my soul.

I’ve got river, in my soul

I’ve got joy like a fountain;

I’ve got joy like a fountain;

I’ve got joy like a fountain, in my soul.

I’ve got fountain in my soul.

I’ve got love like an ocean;

I’ve got love like an ocean;

I’ve got love like an ocean, in my soul.

I’ve got ocean in my soul.

**RESOURCES:**

Sources of insights for the Introduction to Theme:

* 1 Cor 12: 7, 20; Readings, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/12>

* Daily reflections for December 15, 17, and 18, *The Little Blue Book Advent and Christmas* Seasons 2020-2021, [www.ltttlebooks.org](http://www.ltttlebooks.org)
* Daily Readings, December 19, 2020, *At Home Retreat with the Discalced Carmelite Tradition*, December 2020, quoting Bro. Lawrence of the Resurrection. [“*I keep myself recollected in God in the depth and center of my soul* as much as possible, and when I am thus with him I fear nothing.”]
* *Letting Go Is Liberation*, Richard Rohr Meditation, December 18, 2020, Center for Action and Contemplation. [“Maybe this is why scholars have said two-thirds of the teaching of Jesus is, in one form or another, about forgiveness. Forgiveness is simply the religious word for letting go.”] Meditations@CAC.org
* David Brooks, “Mark Shields and the Best of American Liberalism”, *New York Times* (December 17, 2020).

[“Every year he [Mark Shields] invites me to do an event with him with Catholic social workers. These are people who serve the poor and live among the poor. They have really inexpensive clothing and really radiant faces, and in their lives you see the embodiment of an entire moral system, Catholic social teaching, which has its service arm and, in Mark, its political and journalistic arm.’] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/17/opinion/mark-shields-liberalism.html>

Scripture: IS 55:1; IS 42: 1-4, 6-7; MK 1: 7-11; Daily Readings, January 10, 2021, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/011021.cf>

Homily: Fr. Martin Hogan of St. John the Baptist Parish, Contarf, Dublin, Ireland, “Feast of the Baptism of the Lord,” homily originally given in January 2018. [https://frmartinshomiliesandreflections.tumblr.com/search/Mark%201:7-11](https://frmartinshomiliesandreflections.tumblr.com/search/Mark%201%3A7-11)

Communal Prayer Source: The Bidding Prayer, A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, December 24, 2020, Choir of King’s College, Cambridge, UK.

<https://www.classicalmpr.org/story/2020/12/01/festival-of-nine-lessons-and-carols#order>

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Image URL-- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baptism-of-Christ.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABaptism-of-Christ.jpg)

* Is 42:7 Quotation

https://www.google.com/advanced\_image\_search <”’those who sit in darkness’ Isaiah>”

Image URL-- <https://bibleencyclopedia.com/nasb/NASB_Isaiah_42-7.jpg>

* The Prophet Isaiah, Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/The_Prophet_Isaiah_MET_ES387.jpg>

* Baptism of Jesus - Stained glass window at Church of Our Savior MCC, Boynton Beach, Florida, USA

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Music: Selections from “Glory to God”, The Presbyterian Hymnal, Westminster John Knox Press (First Ed. 2013)

* 314 “Christ, Be Our Light”
* 623 “I’ve Got Peace like a River”