



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



First Sunday after Epiphany Baptism of Our Lord

January 12, 2025



Epiphany Moments

Baptism Is the Cure for An Identity Crisis

“Who is Jesus?” For the longest time, people thought the answer to that question was, “Mary and Joseph’s son” or “a carpenter from Nazareth.” While true enough, those answers do not adequately describe Jesus. But when Jesus was baptized, God the Father spoke, declaring Jesus’ true identity. Jesus was the dearly loved Son of God, chosen to be the Savior of the world. “Who are you?” someone asks. To answer that question, we must look to our baptism. Baptism is the cure for an identity crisis. There, just like he did with Jesus, our Father declares us to be his dearly loved child.

First Reading³ 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Young David is anointed by Samuel to Shepherd the Lord’s people, Israel. Centuries later would come fulfillment with the anointing of the Christ and the Lord’s royal priesthood of all believers.

Second Reading³ Titus 3:4-7

Baptism brings the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Christ and David were anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. When we were baptized, the Spirit was poured out on us as well. It was a washing that brought rebirth for sin-deadened hearts and spiritual renewal for fleshly minds. Note how one-sided our baptism is! Like David, there was nothing in us that the Lord should choose us. But as young David was chosen over his older brothers and made into Israel’s king, so we who are worth nothing, become what God makes us: heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Gospel³ Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

The word of the Lord through John and the waters of his baptism powerfully proclaimed preparation for the arrival of the Messiah. For he would come with justice to rule the people with equity. At his own baptism, Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit and power as our Prophet, Priest, and King to the approval of the Father. Just as he who knew no sin was baptized, our baptism is also an anointing by the Spirit, but for the forgiveness of our sins. This is our connection to Christ and his redeeming work.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 2 D “Great Are the Works of the LORD”

The Church sings Psalm 2 in services that emphasize the relationship of the Father and the Son. The Son rules with the same authority as the Father even when government officials try to thwart God’s rule. The New Testament frequently quotes this psalm as applying to Christ, the Son of David. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 2 is a prophecy of how Christ will suffer and become King and Lord of the entire world. This psalm promises that those who believe in Christ will be blessed. Through Christ, God has delivered us from sin, death, and hell, and brought us to eternal life. This is the blessing that we pray for in the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, that his kingdom come.”

Gospel Acclamation Mark 1:11

“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” The voice of God the Father from heaven declares Jesus to be his beloved Son. The entire Trinity is revealed at Christ’s Baptism – reminding us that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit always work together for our salvation. As the Father’s beloved Son, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness, something that children – past, present, and future – fail to do.

Prayer of the Day

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep us who are baptized into Christ faithful in our calling as your children, and make us heirs with him of everlasting life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

 377 “To Jordan’s River Came Our Lord” (James Tiefel, b. 1949)

The hymn reminds us that Jesus Christ, as our substitute, took our place in the waters of baptism to fulfill the Father’s will to save us.

Church Year Season ¹ Epiphany

The readings during the Epiphany season carry forward the emphasis in the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the theme of Jesus revealing himself to us as God and Savior. At the same time the readings present us with a real conundrum. The conundrum is that he hides the manifestations of his deity, so that his glory remains a secret and a mystery, even while he is revealing it. All the riddles are present in the readings for the Feast of the Epiphany. The theme present in all of the Epiphany readings is: He shows his hidden glory to those he calls. You may notice that in many of the Epiphany season readings appropriation is much easier than application. There is a good reason for that: In Christmas and Epiphany our attention is on getting to know Jesus, who he is and how he works; thus there is not so much emphasis on our response beyond the response of faith, which itself is always seen as his work and not ours.

Colors & Symbolism

 White

White is the color of our Triune God and heaven. It also symbolizes joy, celebration, gladness, light, purity and innocence. We receive these blessings through faith because Christ, our righteous Savior, has forgiven all our sins.

Minor Festivals

 Confession of St. Peter (January 18)

Later in his earthly ministry, Jesus tested his disciples about their knowledge of his identity as true God. After asking them, “Who do people say the Son of Man is,” (Matthew 16:13) he asked the disciples directly, “But what about you... who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15). The Apostle St. Peter spoke up for the rest: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus called Simon Peter “blessed” because he had received this knowledge from the Heavenly Father and through faith. We remember Peter’s confession and rejoice in the Holy Spirit that through his Word he has made Peter’s confession our own.

Traditions & Customs

 Baptism of Our Lord

Observed on the First Sunday after the Epiphany; the Festival of the Baptism of Our Lord is sometimes called the “Second Epiphany.” Jesus’ baptism marks the beginning of his public ministry and reminds worshippers of the cleansing of our sins in the water of baptism. On this occasion the Father and the Holy Spirit revealed themselves together with the Son. On this day, some chose to renew their baptismal vows, or hold some other tradition in remembrance of their baptism.

Nain Paraments

 Christmas

Superfrontal: “Immanuel” is Hebrew for “God with us.” This name for Jesus Christ was revealed to God’s people through Isaiah in a prophecy of the Savior’s birth (7:14). The angel Gabriel announced to Joseph in a dream that the child in the Virgin Mary’s womb would be that promised Immanuel – God who had come to be with us (Matthew 1:23) in order to save us. Sometimes the name is spelled *Emmanuel*, which is the Latin alphabet transliteration of the Hebrew pronunciation of the same name.

The vines next to Immanuel represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: *The Greek Cross:* distinguished by four arms of equal length.

Pulpit antependium: *The Celtic Cross:* similar to the Latin cross (†), but with a circle surrounding the center, which symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him.

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

³ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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