

Liturgy

The First Sunday after the Epiphany The Baptism of the Lord

GATHERING

Leader:

Lord, open our lips, and our mouths shall proclaim Your praise.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be ages unto ages. Amen.**

Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;

Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness!

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;

The God of glory thunders!

The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning;

His voice shakes the wilderness!

The voice of the LORD is powerful, and full of majesty.

In His temple all say, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood,

Yes, the LORD sits enthroned as King forever.

The LORD will give strength to His people.

The LORD will bless His people with peace.

Come, let us sing His praise, and give thanks to His holy name.

— from Psalm 29

All Creatures of Our God and King

All creatures of our God and King,

Lift up your voice and with us sing:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam;

Thou silver moon with softer gleam,

O praise Him! O praise Him!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,

Ye clouds that sail in heav'n along:

O praise Him! Alleluia!

Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice;

Ye lights of evening, find a voice.

O praise Him! O praise Him!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,

Make music for thy Lord to hear:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou fire, so masterful and bright,

Thou givest man both warmth and light,

O praise Him! O praise Him!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Text: St. Francis of Assisi, c. 1225; transl. William H. Draper, 1919.

Music: *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Cologne, 1623; hymn tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN.

LECTIONARY for the first Sunday
after the Epiphany, Year C:

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalm 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

This first Sunday following the day of Epiphany is traditionally the day we focus on the Baptism of the Lord. The liturgical season of Epiphany, a varying period of between four and nine Sundays, is a time set aside to look closely at the Person and Work of Jesus, the Son of God, who came to earth to accomplish the redemption and reconciliation of all of creation back to the Creator.

As we focus on Christ's baptism in our worship, we must be amazed and awed at the theological richness and beauty of this event. For here we not only see Jesus identifying with humanity in our human nature as He steps into the waters of the Jordan. We also see a vivid picture of the Trinity, as the Father publicly announces and identifies Jesus as "my Son, whom I love," and the Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove. As we move through the worship service, what are the implications we see and experience for our walk of faith and our being increasingly more formed in the image of Christ?

The Gathering antiphonal reading, taken from the Psalm text for today, is written for a leader (pastor, cantor, etc.) and two readers or groups. Beginning with the familiar prayer of Invocation of Psalm 51:15, followed by the words of Gloria Patri (also referred to as the "lesser doxology"), it immediately brings our attention to the Trinity.

You may hear a sung setting of the Gloria Patri in the Audio Media Studio section of the Music Room.

Here are the links:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/gloria-patri>

https://clerestorynotes.com/live/content/music_library/gloria-patri-clip

INVOCATION

Prayers of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for God's presence

All Creatures of Our God and King

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness: O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One.
O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Amen

Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen. (Sing it over ...)

See the little baby (amen), Lyin' in a manger (amen),
On Christmas morning – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him in the temple (amen), Talkin' to the elders (amen),
Who marvel at His wisdom – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him at the Jordan (amen), Where John was baptizin' (amen),
And the Spirit came upon Him – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him at the sea side (amen), Preachin' and healin' (amen)
The blind and the feeble – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him in the garden (amen), Prayin' to His Father (amen),
In deepest sorrow – Amen, amen, amen.

Then they crucified Him (amen), Jesus, our Savior (amen),
And He rose on Easter! Amen, amen, amen.

Hallelujah! (amen), He died to save us (amen),
And He lives forever - Amen, amen, amen. Amen, amen, amen.

Public domain. Words and music: traditional African-American spiritual.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Let us together affirm the testimony of the apostle Peter:

God shows no partiality:

**But in every nation anyone who fears Him
and does what is right is accepted by Him.**

This is the message God sent,
announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ,
who is Lord of all.

**This message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee,
after the baptism announced by John:
God anointed Jesus of Nazareth
with the Holy Spirit and with power;
He went about doing good
and healing all who were oppressed by the devil,
for God was with Him.**

And yet they put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree.

**But God raised Him to life on the third day
and revealed Him to those who were chosen by God as witnesses,
and who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.**

He is the One ordained by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

**Of Him all the prophets bear witness
that everyone who believes in Him
receives forgiveness of sins through His name.**

—based on Acts 10:34-43

This is an interesting, fun, and (perhaps) unexpected medley of a classic hymn with a traditional spiritual that reflects the whole story of God while placing the Baptism of Christ at the center of the song.
- Performance tip: sing this verse of All Creatures of Our God and King in the key of C. Ritard as usual the last "alleluia," then begin the intro (tempo and rhythmic change) right on the last syllable, "-ia!" Modulate the verses of Amen up by half-steps as desired.

The Profession of Faith is drawn from Peter's sermon to those gathered at the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Caesarea, as recorded in Acts 10. (This passage is included in the lectionary for the Baptism of the Lord, Year A.) Written as a responsive reading, it reminds us not only of the Person and Work of Christ, but that Jesus' public ministry began with His baptism.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

The call and promise of the Lord:

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean;

I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh,
and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

– Ezekiel 36:25-27

Eternal and merciful God,

You have loved us with a love beyond our understanding,
and You have set us on paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake.
Yet we have strayed from Your way.

[Silence]

We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed,
through what we have done and what we have left undone,
and we have wandered from Your pathway.

[Silent confessions]

**As we remember the cleansing water of baptism, O God,
we praise You and give You thanks that You forgive us yet again.
Grant us now, we pray, the grace to die daily to sin,
and to rise daily to new life in Christ,
who lives and reigns with You,
and in whose strong name we pray. Amen.**

Whiter Than Snow

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want You forever to live in my soul.
Break down ev’ry idol, cast out ev’ry foe.
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, look down from Your throne in the skies,
And help me to make a complete sacrifice.
I give up myself and whatever I know;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, before You I patiently wait;
Come now and within me a new heart create.
To those who have sought You, You never said no.
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

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Text: James Nicholson; Music: William G. Fischer

The call to Confession text is not part of today’s lectionary, but it does remind us of God’s promise to cleanse us and His expectation of our repentance and commitment to follow His path.

This prayer comes from a wonderful resource, “True Confession: Ideas for recovering a true spirit of confession in worship,” originally published in Reformed Worship: Resources for Planning and Leading Worship, RW:52 (spaces for silence and silent confessions added).

*It is available online at:
<http://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-1999/true-confession-ideas-recovering-true-spirit-confession-worship>
(accessed 10 January 2025)*

Music for Ellen’s setting of Whiter Than Snow is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet.

Here’s a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/whiter-snow>

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

When the goodness and loving kindness
of God our Savior appeared, He saved us,
not because of works done by us in righteousness,
but according to His own mercy,
by the washing of regeneration
and renewal of the Holy Spirit,
whom He poured out on us richly
through Jesus Christ our Savior,
so that being justified by His grace
we might become heirs
according to the hope of eternal life.
This is a trustworthy saying.

– Titus 3:4-5

Thanks be to God!

TIME OF OFFERING

Words and prayers of thanksgiving and praise

More Like Jesus

You came to the world You created,
Trading Your crown for a cross.
You willingly died, Your innocent life paid the cost.

Counting Your status as nothing,
The King of all kings came to serve;
Washing my feet, covering me with Your love.

Chorus:

If more of You means less of me, take everything.
Yes, all of You, is all I need; take everything.

You are my life and my treasure,
The One that I can't live without.
Here at Your feet, my desires and dreams I lay down.
Here at Your feet, my desires and dreams I lay down.

Bridge:

O, Lord, change me like only You can.
Here with my heart in Your hands,
Father, I pray: Make me more like Jesus.
This world is dying to know who You are.
You've shown us the way to Your heart.
So, Father, I pray: Make me more like Jesus.

CCLI Song #7105732 ©SHOUT! Music Publishing | sixsteps Music |
worshiptogether.com songs. Brooke Ligertwood, Scott Ligertwood,
Kristian Stanfill, Brett Younker.

THE WORD

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalm 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

On Baptism of the Lord Sunday, we've often used the familiar Let the Rain of Your Presence (CCLI Song #1606354 ©1994 Praise On The Rock Music; Danny Chambers).

More Like Jesus brings our focus to what it meant that Christ identified with humanity in His baptism, and what it means and requires of us when we respond to His coming and His sacrifice.

THE TABLE

Remembering the Body of Christ

The Lord be with you!

And also with you!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!

Our Father in Heaven (sung)

Our Father in heaven,
Your name is holy,
Your name is holy, our Father.
Your kingdom come,
And Your will be done
Here on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us, we pray,
Our bread for today,
Our debts forgive
And in turn we will live,
Forgiving of what others owe.
Keep us from trials;
Save us from our ancient foe!

As we sing the kingdom,
We sing the power,
We sing the glory be Yours –
Forever. Amen. Amen. Amen!

Words: Chris Alford. Music: Chris Alford and Ellen Koehler .
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Flow Like a River

Flow like a river, fall like the rain;
Streams of compassion flow from His throne.
Wide as the ocean, deep as the sea;
Life-giving fountain, is God's love for me.

Feast at the table of mercy,
Drink from the cup of His grace.
Dwell in His infinite goodness,
Live in His healing embrace.

CCLI Song # 2989523 ©2000 Integrity's Hosanna! Music.
Steve Merkel.

Living Water

Come, Living Water
Flow through me like a river.
My heart's been thirsting so long.
Flood through my soul
And pour out your mercy.
Come, Living Water, fill me.

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Bob Carlisle and Randy Thomas

Music for this setting of the Lord's Prayer, Our Father in Heaven, is available in the sheet music catalog as a lead sheet, and as a solo/melody line with piano accompaniment on request.

Here's a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/our-father-heaven>

These songs have an obvious resonance with the image of water and the theme of baptism.

As an alternative to Living Water, you may wish to include I Can Hear Your Voice (CCLI Song #3926011 ©2002 Smittyfly Music/Word Music LLC; Debbie Smith, Michael W. Smith Whitney Smith): "I'm in the river that flows from Your throne, water of life, water of life, . . ."

If you'd like to continue a focus on the humanity and servanthood of Christ, you might also consider the classic 1983 song by Graham Kendrick, The Servant King (CCLI Song #78897 ©1983 Thankyou Music): "This is our God, the Servant King; He calls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the Servant King."

SENDING FORTH
The Life of the Body

All Creatures of Our God and King (Doxology)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below:
O Praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly hosts;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Benediction:

God the Father, who sent His Spirit upon His Son,
bless you with the presence of His Spirit.

Amen.

Jesus, who received the Spirit and manifested the Father,
abide in you and make you a manifestation of His life.

Amen.

And God the Spirit, who came upon Christ in the fullness of power,
empower you to live in the pattern of baptismal spirituality
revealed in Jesus.

Amen.

To the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

A thought about worship... "The baptized life is a life that is lived in the *pattern of death and resurrection*. . . . The way of being in Jesus, the way of living the new resurrected life, is through participation. . . . We participate in Christ by living the life of our baptism into his death and resurrection. This is a daily, existential, moment-by-moment experience as we choose in this or that situation to die to the sins for which Christ died and choose the life of the Spirit for which Christ was raised to a new life." (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004], 146-147.)

Lectionary for next week: Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

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Singing the final, doxological verse of our Gathering hymn is a powerful reinforcement of the picture of the Trinity seen in the Baptism of Christ, and sends us out into the world to love and serve Him in great joy!