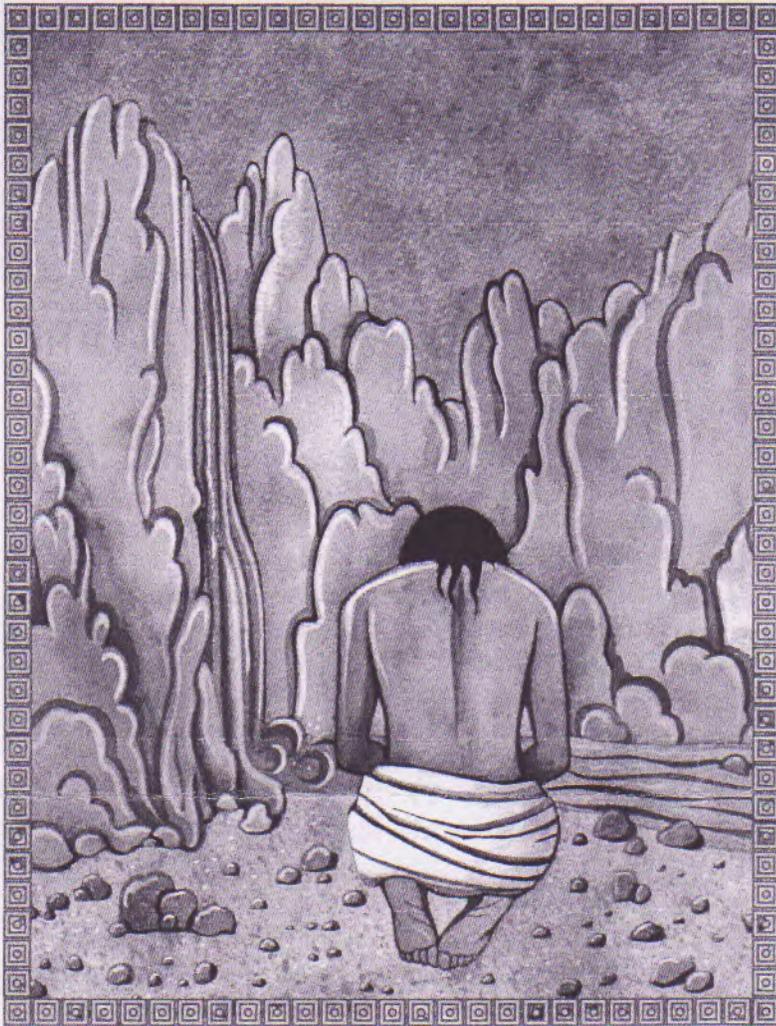


Baptism of the Lord



Give Us a Sense of Expectation

God of great beginnings,
you who sent your Son, Jesus,
to stand in solidarity
with all humanity,
in prayer and Baptism,
give us a sense of expectation,
as you gave the crowds around
John.

Attune us to your surprising
graces and revelations.
Deepen our gratitude for
a Savior who is one with us.
Delight in us
as you did in Jesus.
We ask this through the same
Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, January 13, 2013
One With Us



Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30 (1); Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Luke 3:15-16, 21-22. The first line of today's Gospel sets the tone: "As the people were filled with expectation. . . ." Anticipation seems the necessary prelude to all that follows. John can't do it alone: his listeners must take ownership of their conversions.

How many people would pay for expensive theatre or concert tickets, then ignore the performance, play computer games, check e-mail, or chat? When they've made a large investment in time or money, it's as though the audience stands on tiptoe as the curtain opens.

Are we equally excited about God's revelations in our lives? This is not a performance designed for thousands; this is God writing our unique stories. Have we grown so used to

the surprising reversals and unexpected graces that we yawn, blasé? What would make us pay attention?

Another line seems key: "Jesus also had been baptized and was praying." Immediately after, heaven opens and God's voice expresses delight in the beloved Son. But that miracle doesn't seem to give Jesus privileges denied other humans. Instead, Jesus identifies with his people and their needs for prayer and Baptism.

He walks with ordinary women and men. Despite heart-break and illness, betrayal and tragedy, the faithful continue their quiet, undramatic work for God's reign. He joins them in schools, hospitals, offices, homes, factories, fields, stores. Wherever his people are, Jesus is too. Even with us. Even here. Even now.



This Week at Home and Looking Ahead to Ordinary Time

Ordinary Time, Winter: Special Days January 18–25, 2013: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

At this time, we pray for the healing of divisions among the Christian churches and participate in ecumenical prayer services. Each year a biblical theme is prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in cooperation with the World Council of Churches. Find out what joint prayer services may be scheduled in your community. To learn more about ecumenical dialogue, visit the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. An address by the Holy Father Benedict XVI at an ecumenical gathering in New York City in 2008 is especially interesting: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/dialogue-with-others/ecumenical/>.

January 25, 2013

Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul

Paul's conversion story is surely one of the most dramatic: the flash of light, the voice of Christ speaking to him, the 180 degree turn in his thinking and his life. He was changed forever and became the Church's most eloquent and passionate teacher. Though our stories may not be as colorful, we are all on a path and we all experience "ongoing" conversion—small flashes, insights, or realizations that pull us ever closer to God. What recent curves in your path might you want to share with a trusted friend or write about in your journal? Today's Readings: Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22; Psalm 117:1bc, 2 (Mark 16:15); Mark 16:15–18.

February 2, 2013

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Today's Gospel from Luke is a much-loved narrative from the group of stories often referred to as the "infancy cycle." The elderly prophet, Simeon, and prophetess, Anna, are unforgettable characters. In their wisdom and sensitivity to God's work, they instantly recognize who Jesus is and will be for the Chosen People. Read and reflect on Simeon's Canticle, Luke 2:29–32. How will Jesus be "a light for revelation?" Because of this reference to light, some people bring candles to church to be blessed and then light them in their homes tonight. Today's Readings: Malachi 3:1–4; Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10 (8); Hebrews 2:14–18; Luke 2:22–40.

February 12, 2013

Mardi Gras

In some places, the Carnival season lasts from Epiphany to Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. It's the "feast before the fast," an occasion for parades, dancing, music, masks, and burning winter in effigy.

In preparation for the fast to come, people have enjoyed eating up any sugary or fat-filled treats. Today, churches often sponsor an after-Mass brunch of pancakes, fritters, or donuts. Other pre-Lenten rituals include burying the Alleluia (a scroll with the word on it, since we won't say the word again until the Easter Vigil) and burning last year's palms to make ashes for Ash Wednesday.

It's also time to plan this year's approach to Lent: how will you adapt or incorporate the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this year? Where are you, and what are your needs? How is God calling you closer during the great season of Christian retreat?



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Keeping the Seasons
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