

What Have You Done with Your Baptism?

In his world travels, Pope John Paul II often asked Catholics, "What have you done with your Baptism?" We know that when Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit launched him forth on his mission of evangelization. We might ask ourselves, "What have we done with the call and gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist (Sacraments of Initiation)?" The United States Bishops remind us, "Jesus Christ sends that same Spirit upon everyone who is baptized in his name. For we have all gone down into the water of Christ and have all been anointed to bring Good News and to be true disciples. We have all received his Spirit. This is not a Spirit of timidity or fear, but a bold Spirit of life, truth, joy, and grace. (*Go and Make Disciples*, 67)

Below is a 30 to 45 minute group prayer exercise for staffs, ministries, adult faith formation offerings, or faith-sharing groups to help us to explore how the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) have come alive in our lives, calling us to evangelize. It includes singing, silent meditation, and small group faith-sharing.

Appoint someone to lead and facilitate the exercise throughout, keeping to the suggested times as much as possible. Please emphasize also the importance of maintaining confidentiality about what is shared in the small groups.

1. **Gather the entire group and lead them in the opening song, "Come Holy Ghost,"** or another appropriate song about the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us.

"Come, Holy Ghost" (Vs. 1&2)

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up Thy rest;
Come with Thy grace and heav'nly aid,
To fill the hearts which Thou hast made,
To fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

O Comforter, to Thee we cry,
Thou heav'nly Gift of God most high;
Thou fount of life and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above,
And sweet anointing from above.

2. **Read aloud Luke 3:3-22—"John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus"** (Followed by 5 minutes of silent meditation with "Reflection Questions" below)

Reading 1: Lk. 3:3-6;16;21-22

[John the Baptist] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation...'"

John [said], "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (NRSV)

4. Individual Reflection Questions: "Jesus' Baptism and Ours" (5 mins. in silence)
(Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. There are no wrong answers.)

- a. How old were you when you were baptized? Do you know your Baptismal date?
- b. In what church, city/town, state, and or country were you baptized?
- c. What are three things you know or remember about your Baptism? Or what are three things that you were told by your parents, Godparents, relatives, and/or friends who were there when you were baptized?
- d. Describe any keepsakes of your Baptism that you still have today (i.e. Baptismal certificate, photos, gown, stole, candle, crosses, jewelry, books, special gifts or other things)? What do these keepsakes mean for you today?
- e. "What have you done with your Baptism?" How has the meaning of your Baptism changed over the years? How have you experienced Baptism as a call to evangelize?

5. Move into small groups of four people (not more than five). Go around the group and answer questions a. to e., one question at a time. (30 mins.)

6. For the closing song use: "Come, Holy Ghost" (Vs. 3)

Praise be to thee Father and Son,
And Holy Spirit three in one;
And may the Son on us bestow
The gifts that from the Spirit flow,
The gifts that from the Spirit flow.

Take-Home Challenge:

Ask three or four other Catholics in your everyday life about their Baptisms. You might use some of the reflection questions a. to d. above to start the conversation. After a time, and if it is appropriate, ask:

- **How has your understanding of Baptism changed over the years?**
- **How are you different because you are a baptized Catholic?**
- **What is God calling you to do with your Baptism?**