



# Bringing Home the Word

*Baptism of the Lord (B)*  
January 10, 2021

## Stories as Windows into the Past

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When we were growing up, my siblings and I would often ask our grandmother to tell us stories about our mother when she was young. We liked listening to our mother tell those same stories from her perspective. The stories varied in some details, but it always felt like a veil was lifted on the past and we had some sense of where we came from along with some insight about our mother’s personality.

She, of course, did the same thing for my daughters, making them giggle

at the story of my getting into her perfume bottle when I was three. Such stories connect us with the people we know. Old friends trade stories of shared experiences; young companions learn about the world from the stories of their elders and even from the stories their friends tell them about their lives.

In Acts, Peter appeals to his listeners by telling the story they know so well. He even appeals to their shared experience as he says, “You know...” (v. 36). Stories connect us to one another, opening the door to understanding each other a little more and a little better. In his story, Peter marks the baptism of Jesus as the beginning of his ministry. Our story in the Christian community begins with baptism as well. Peter records that Jesus went on “doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” (v. 38). What would the story of our lives after baptism tell people about us? Would someone like Peter tell people that we went about doing good and loving God and neighbor? +

## Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7 or  
Isaiah 55:1–11**

Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased.

**Acts 10:34–38 or John 5:1–9**

He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil.

**Mark 1:7–11**

[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.”

*Stories connect us, opening the door to understanding each other a little more and a little better.*

## A Word from Pope Francis

To baptize a child is an act of justice toward them. Why? Because at baptism we offer a treasure, at baptism we offer a pledge: the Holy Spirit. Baptism endows the child with the strength of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit that will defend and assist each of them throughout life.

—Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, January 12, 2020



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you tell children you know stories about your life that teach moral lessons?
- Do you look back on your life stories, and use lessons learned to draw closer to God?

# Our Great Mosaic

By Johan van Parys

A few years ago, our church hosted an exhibit of contemporary art. Some considered the art beautiful and engaging; others thought it ugly and offensive. Though acceptable for a gallery, contemporary art was deemed unfitting for our historic church. I was told a classical building should be adorned with classical art, not abstract.

I remembered the many churches I'd visited throughout Europe. Most had been built and rebuilt over the course of many centuries, with each century leaving its own distinctive mark. As a result, it isn't unusual for a church to have a Romanesque nave, Gothic adornments, a Renaissance facade, Baroque side altars, abstract windows, and contemporary appointments such as the altar and ambo. Regardless of their stylistic complexity, they evoke a sense of perfect unity and harmony. Often it takes a guide to remind a visitor that the building is the result of hundreds of years of labor and love.

I have often wished for a similar guide to point out that, similar to its buildings' art and architecture, the Church itself is complex and diverse and was not created all at once. But unlike a tour guide who easily elicits repeated oohs and ahs, someone pointing out the diversity in our Church may not experience the same reception. Many of us probably wish for a kind of cookie-cutter Catholic Church. Wouldn't things be easier if everyone believed and prayed exactly the same and



preferred the same art and architecture? In our search for ecclesiastical safety and security, do we readily confuse unity with uniformity and create a false notion of what it means to be a "true" Catholic?

The fundamental unity of the Church, after all, is not based on superficial uniformity. Rather, it is rooted in our shared belonging to the body of Christ, in which there are many different parts. Like its architecture, art, and music, for example, the Church has evolved and grown for more than twenty centuries into a complex and diverse reality while enjoying harmony and unity within its rich diversity. And as is the case with architecture and art, the differences between the many members of the

Church do not detract from the unity of the Church, but rather enrich, enhance, and strengthen our bond.

Addressing new metropolitan archbishops, Pope Francis said this about unity in our diversity: "In the Church, variety, which is itself a great treasure, is always grounded in the harmony of unity, like a great mosaic in which every small piece joins with others as part of God's one great plan. United in our differences—there is no other Catholic way to be united. This is the Catholic spirit, the Christian spirit: to be united in our differences. This is the way of Jesus!" +

*The Church is the result of centuries of labor and love.*

**PRAYER**

*Lord, help me to discern my gifts and talents and use them for the common good of all people.*

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

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## WEEKDAY READINGS

January 11–16

**Monday, Weekday:**  
Heb 1:1–6 / Mk 1:14–20

**Tuesday, Weekday:**  
Heb 2:5–12 / Mk 1:21–28


**Wednesday, Weekday:**  
Heb 2:14–18 / Mk 1:29–39

**Thursday, Weekday:**  
Heb 3:7–14 / Mk 1:40–45

**Friday, Weekday:**  
Heb 4:1–5, 11 / Mk 2:1–12

**Saturday, Weekday:**  
Heb 4:12–16 / Mk 2:13–17

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