

Baptism of Our Lord Workshop Notes



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

LEADER'S NOTES

This presentation lasts *up to* 20 minutes. We recommend you deliver the whole workshop but please use the material as time and circumstances allow.

This workshop has been prepared by **Missio**, Pope Francis' worldwide charity for overseas mission. Through educational, medical, welfare and formation initiatives, Missio brings the hope of the Gospel where there is turmoil, poverty and uncertainty in the world.

Through lived examples in this workshop, pupils can see how Missio is supporting Church-backed projects around the world that are witnessing to God's great love for us all, especially the poorest, the marginalised, and the most vulnerable.

Missio projects are almost entirely funded by supporters' donations. With the exception of Gift Aid, we receive no UK government assistance. **Your support enables our work to continue overseas and at home.**



START OF WORKSHOP

SLIDE TWO

Over the last two weeks this has become a familiar sad sight: discarded Christmas trees letting us know the celebrations are well and truly over. But are they?

In the world's eyes Christmas may be over but, in the eyes of the Church, Christmas does not end until we celebrate two important feasts: the Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus.*



In fact, if we were Christians living in different parts of the world, most especially if we were Orthodox Christians living in Greece or further east in Russia, we'd find it odd to have Christmas Day as **the** big event. For them gifts are not exchanged until the Epiphany and celebrations don't end until days later, on the feast of Jesus' Baptism.

This isn't unusual. In the first centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus, all Christians across the world focused their attention on these events. The birth of Jesus was important, but it is what God communicates in the Epiphany and through Jesus' Baptism that deserved the bigger celebration.

Why? What's so special about what the Epiphany and Baptism communicate?

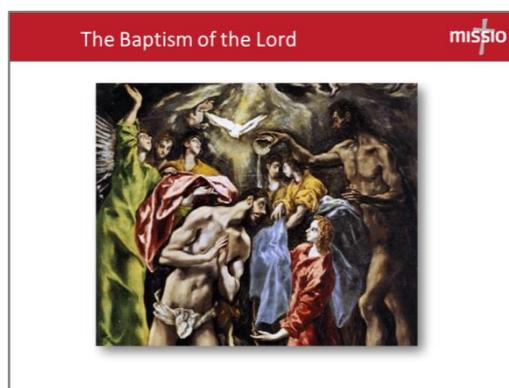
Let's focus today on Jesus' Baptism.

SLIDE THREE

Ask students to briefly tell you what they can about the Baptism of the Lord. The image on the slide may help prompt responses. Challenge students to identify the three responses that are to be revealed on the screen.

Click twice to reveal these responses

- **Through baptism Jesus committed himself to God's will**



Although as a Jewish baby Jesus was presented at the Temple by his parents for a special blessing, his decision as a grown man to be baptised in the Jordan communicated something important about his own commitment to God's plan. Our parents make a similar commitment on our behalf when we are baptised, this commitment is made complete when **we choose for ourselves** the Sacrament of Confirmation.

- **John baptised Jesus along with sinners and outcasts**

Hundreds of people were going into the Jordan wilderness to be baptised in the river by Jesus' crusader cousin, John. Most of those seeking baptism were in need of forgiveness and a fresh start. As sinners and outcasts they were unwelcome in the synagogues and consequently in their communities. By choosing to be baptised with them, Jesus was sending out the message that he wanted to stand alongside and be there for them. Jesus wouldn't reject them.

- **The Holy Spirit hovered and God spoke from heaven during Jesus' Baptism**

Although Jesus chose to be baptised alongside sinners and outcasts, the presence of the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) and the voice from heaven* remind us that Jesus is marked out as different. He is the Son of God. Through Jesus' words and actions we understand, more closely than ever before, who God is and what God asks of us.

* *The words Jesus hears from heaven are 'You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.'*
These will be heard in the scripture reading at the end of the assembly.

SLIDE FOUR

The Baptism of the Lord reveals an image of God that many Christians down the ages believe is worthy of great celebration.

- The Baptism teaches us that Jesus, who is God, welcomes and values all people. Whatever their background, whatever their status, whatever their past, God welcomes everyone and stands alongside them in their struggles and in their celebrations

[Click to reveal image](#)

- The Baptism shows us that it is God's desire that we, like Jesus and the others who sought baptism from John, should *freely choose* to follow God more closely - not to be swayed by the attitudes of others, but to make our own faith commitment

[Click to reveal image](#)

- The Baptism of Jesus shows us that through God's love and mercy there is always a chance to see things differently and make a fresh start, provided we resolve to follow more closely the example of Christ.

This would be the best New Year's resolution we could make for ourselves and for our world: To see things as God does and commit to sharing Christ's love and mercy with others.

SLIDE FIVE

One group of teenagers who are being encouraged to see things differently and supported to make a fresh start are these students from the **Cardinal Maurice Otunga Girls Empowerment Centre*** in Kenya.

The girls were rescued from the streets and slums of Kenya's capital, Nairobi, where they lived in extreme poverty. Most of the girls have never been to school; their families were too poor to pay for uniforms, shoes,



and book fees. Some have been caring for sick parents. In desperation and to get by, many of the girls were drawn into criminal activity and wrongdoing in order to raise money to support themselves and their families.

The Empowerment Centre provides free support for around 30 girls. The Centre provides the girls with a safe and loving home, as well as an education. They are given counselling, healthcare, and are taught life-skills. They also receive training to help them find work once they leave the Centre, so that they do not return to the streets but are able to earn a living as cooks, seamstresses, or office workers. The photo on screen shows a group of students attending a cookery class.

The religious sisters, who run the Empowerment Centre along with the help of Missio, have committed their lives to following Christ's example. This means they spend their days delivering God's love to everyone, especially the most vulnerable and forgotten in our world.

**To find out more about Missio's work with the Empowerment Centre visit www.missio.org.uk The Centre and students are also featured in our CST workshop on Human Dignity, available to download from Missio's education pages.*

****Pope Francis' words are simply added on screen as a stand alone inspirational quotation.*

SLIDE SIX

There are many ways in which we too can resolve to deliver God's love to others this year. One way is by being mindful of the needs of those close to home and those far away; then doing what we can to reach out and help. This might be through practical support, campaigning for change, or fundraising.

We can also support people in need by remembering them in our prayers. This may seem only a small thing, but prayer is very important.

Being held in the prayers and hearts of others, even strangers, reminds us that we are held in God's heart, too. In a way that goes beyond explanation, prayer strengthens us and those we pray for.

We know through the Gospels that Jesus prayed often. In these prayers Jesus learned from His Father what to do and what to say, so that people might understand God's love and have the courage to leave their past behind and make a fresh start.

We'll finish this workshop by listening to a Gospel account of the Baptism of the Lord, and within this, we will be invited to pray. Do your best to concentrate on the words you are about to hear, and especially the last line, which we will say together.

This line reminds us that we, too, are invited to share the gift of God's love and the gift of ourselves to make the world a better place and help those within it who struggle.



SLIDE EIGHT

It is recommended that you ask a student to read out the scripture in parts as outlined in notes below, with another student reading out the accompanying prayers. Please note, to avoid overladen slides, the prayers are added in the notes only.

John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, calling for people to change their ways and make a fresh start...

Lord, at the start of a new year we pray for all who want to make a fresh start. We ask that you help us to be merciful and encourage those who want to change their lives for the better.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

And there went out to him all the people, and they were baptised in the River Jordan...

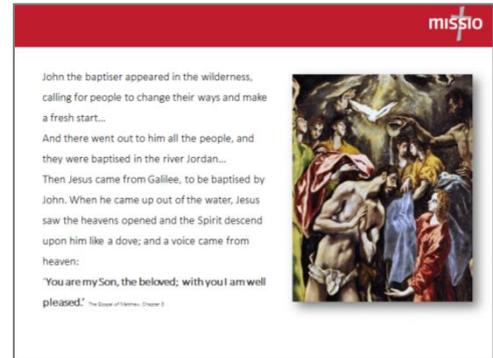
Lord, we pray for all those who commit their lives to your service. We give thanks for their efforts to share your love through their actions and words. Bless our priests, nuns, teachers, nurses, doctors and all who aim to help people flourish.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Then Jesus came from Galilee, to be baptised by John. When he came up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descend upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Lord, help us to understand that we too are your beloved sons and daughters. May our knowledge of this inspire us to share your love with everyone, this year and always.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**



SLIDE NINE – Closing holding slide

