

Unit 4

Observances

23. Theophany

What do we learn about Jesus at His baptism?

24. Annunciation/Visitation

How does the Theotokos respond to the message God sent her?

25. The Great Fast

What can we do to prepare ourselves for Pascha?

26. Pascha/Myrrhbearers

What Good News do we celebrate on Pascha?

27. Pentecost

How does the Holy Spirit help us?

Supplementary Activities

The following are suggested activities to help students focus on the information of the lesson:

1. Write the lesson's question on the board or on a poster board. After sections of the lesson are read, go back to the question and write answers. This Supplementary Activity is on the third page of each lesson plan.
2. This activity could be done as a class or as an individual project: Distribute note cards at the beginning of each lesson. Have the students write the words from the "Let us remember ..." section in the student text on one side and the definition on the other side. Use these cards for review throughout the year

What do we learn about Jesus at His baptism?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the students should be able to

- tell the story about the Baptism of Jesus.
- explain how each member of the Trinity was revealed.
- state that Jesus is the Lamb of God sacrificed for us.

For the Catechist

This last unit, "Observances," helps the children connect the feast days to the theme of the book: the ministry of God's people. The five lessons in this unit recognize the way Jesus, the Theotokos, and the followers of Jesus serve God and His people. These feast days identified by the Church recall the events that lead to our salvation. Through these feast day lessons, the students will learn how to say "Yes" to everything that God asks because "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15).

The first lesson, the Feast of Theophany, is included also in the "Observances" unit in the Kindergarten through Grade 2 texts and every year in the unit "Our Church Year"; therefore, the students are familiar with the story of Saint John baptizing Jesus. In Grade 2 they learned that the Trinity was revealed at Jesus' Baptism, and this year they are introduced to Jesus' sacrificial ministry that begins on the day of His Baptism. In the Gospel of Saint John we hear John the Baptist saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (1:29). Saint John is telling us that Jesus has come to sacrifice His life to save us from eternal death.

The first unit in this Grade 5 book explains the Mysteries as encounters with Jesus. Through the Mysteries of Initiation, we "put on Christ," accept the gift of the Holy Spirit, and receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We become one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus begins His public ministry after His Baptism. The same is expected of us Christians—we are to minister and serve others as Jesus did.

Materials Needed

Opening and Closing Prayers: Prayer page

Introduction: Newspaper and Theophany icon

The Message: New Testament, pens and pencils, note cards,

Application: Construction paper, pens and pencils, *Come Bless the Lord* Theophany icon, prosphora worksheet from lesson 8

Icons and Pictures

Come Bless the Lord: Theophany of Our Lord

Teaching Pics: Epiphany (Theophany)—F4

Connections

1. Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Have the students gather before the icon and stand silently for a few seconds. Then make the sign of the cross. Pray the troparion and kontakion for the feast. (Prayer page)

2. Review (4 minutes)

Lessons in this unit are not taught consecutively; therefore, review the last lesson taught.

3. Introduction (4 minutes)

Materials: Local newspaper and Theophany icon

Hold up the newspaper and ask if anyone recognizes anyone in the pictures. If someone does, have them explain what they know about the person. If not, continue.

Hold up the Theophany icon and ask if anyone recognizes anyone in the icon. Let them share. Ask:

- *How do you know this?* (Catechists, parents, Scripture told them)
- *Are there any people in the world who might not recognize the people in the icon? Who?* (People who have not been told about Jesus)

Connect this idea to the concept that the people in Jesus' time did not recognize Him. They needed someone to tell them who He was.

Alternate: Place the following icons around the room: Theophany, Nativity, Descent into Hades. Ask: *Identify the people in these icons. How do you know?*

Notes for the lesson:

(Use this space to write helpful hints to use each year)

The Message

4. St. John the Baptist

(5 minutes)

- a) Read the first paragraph.
- b) Ask for two volunteers to read the next paragraph aloud—one will read the text; the other will read Saint John's words included in the text.
- c) Have the students find the text in the New Testament and complete the Scripture.
- d) Continue with the two readers for the next two paragraphs and complete the reading.

Supplementary Activity:

Act out the Scripture (John 1:19-34). Divide the class into two groups—one for verses 19-28 and the other for verses 29-34. Encourage the students to improvise the actions.

Supplementary Activity:

Write the question for this lesson on the board or on a poster board: *What do we learn about Jesus at His Baptism?* Write the following answers when you read them in the text:

1. He is God's Son, and God is pleased with Him.
2. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in the Trinity.
3. Jesus is the Lamb of God.
4. Jesus will be sacrificed for us.

Background Reading:

(Theophany)

"A second cycle of feasts in the Church year is called the *Immovable Cycle* because these observances are kept on the same date each year. Chief of these are the feasts of Christmas and the Theophany. *Christmas* (December 25) remembers the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. *The Theophany* (January 6) remembers the baptism of our Lord in the River Jordan by the holy prophet John. They are closely connected because they celebrate the 'appearance' of our Lord in the world. They are a development of our understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ. When He was recognized as Son of God by His resurrection (Rom 1:4), early Christians also began to appreciate this mystery of His incarnation in the Gospel events of His birth and baptism. His birth is described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with wise men from 'the East' recognizing Him as Messiah and King and with angels proclaiming Him as such to shepherds. At His baptism John recognized Him as the great Prophet who was to come; the Father from Heaven declared Him to be His Son; and the Spirit came upon Him revealing Him to be the Messiah" (LLII 41).

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Theophany

What do we learn about Jesus at His Baptism?



Saint John the Baptist
Saint John the Baptist is called the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Forerunner means someone who comes before to announce and to prepare the people for someone else. That is exactly what Saint John did—he prepared the people for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He prepared the people by preaching about the coming of the Messiah. But his listeners wanted to know who John was—a prophet or the Messiah. We can read Saint John's answer in the Gospel of John. Turn to **John 1:23** to complete the answer: "I am 'the voice of one crying out in the desert, "Make straight the way of the Lord" _____"

Saint John went on to explain, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie" (John 1:26-27).

Imagine the excitement and confusion of the people. John told them to prepare for the Lord, but the people did not know how they would know Him.

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5. Lamb of God

(6 minutes)

a) Read the first paragraph and the Scripture and complete the verse. Complete the reading in the next two paragraphs.

b) Arrange the students by groups of two and tell them to reread the last two paragraphs—one person explains to the other the information about the Old Testament and the other explains what "Lamb of God" means. Stay in these groups for the next part.

6. Theophany Icon

(5 minutes)

a) After this section is read by the entire class aloud or silently, the students working in groups of two explain the symbolism—one person explains the symbolism described for God and the second the symbolism for the Holy Spirit.

b) Tell them to look at the Theophany icon as the explanations are given.

Supplemental Activity

(5 minutes)

Enlarge the Theophany icon and place it on poster board.

Write brief descriptions about the symbolism of the icon and place it around the icon. Connect the descriptions that can be written on note cards to the icon with yarn. Use small straight pins to pin one end of the yarn to the card and the other to the location on the icon. Display this icon in the room. Use the information from the back of the *Come Bless the Lord* icon for more details

Background Reading:

(Sacrifice or Christ)

"Life is in the blood, and blood is the symbol of life. In the Old Testament it was not the sacrifice itself that obtained remission of sins, but the sprinkling of the blood on the people. Anyone could sacrifice. But only the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice, thus accomplishing the remission of sins. This is what Christ has done for us: 'Christ, the High Priest, has accomplished once and for all an eternal redemption for us' (Heb. 9:11-12).

"Communion, consequently, is the way we enter most intimately into the Sacrifice of Christ. It is the climax of our participation in this sacrifice. It is the moment when Christ acts upon us sacramentally, sprinkles his Blood on us to draw us into his sacrificial offering. It is the moment when he gives full bodily direction to our love and to our whole being. Because of his love he opens all of himself to us and in our reciprocal love we open ourselves to him. Communion unites us, therefore, to make the two into one; more, to make us one with all of our brothers and with the whole world" (FG 188).

Lamb of God
Saint John helped the people by announcing the presence of Jesus. Continue reading the **Gospel of Saint John 1:29-34** to hear what happened. How does Saint John greet Jesus when he first sees Him? (verse 29) "Behold, the Lamb of God"

Now Jesus is being called "the Lamb of God." Saint John is telling us that Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection will save us from eternal death and will grant us life. Just like the Israelites, we are saved by the blood of a Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Theophany Icon
When we look at the icon of the Theophany, we see another way Jesus was recognized as the Son of God. At the top of the icon, the opening of heaven is symbolized by the segment of a circle. This circle signifies that God is present at Jesus' Baptism. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read "And a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17).

The rays of light surrounding the figure of a dove shows us symbolically that the Holy Spirit is present. This symbolism is based on the words from Saint John, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit'." Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God" (John 1:33-34).

Our Church observes this event on January 6, the Feast of Theophany. We celebrate the Baptism of Jesus and the revelation of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



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7. The Divine Liturgy

(10 minutes)

- a) Read the first paragraph.
- b) Read the next paragraph aloud and refer to the worksheets in Lesson 8 to review the details about the bread for Holy Communion.
- c) Read the final paragraphs. Reread the priest's prayer aloud as a group. Ask: *What does sanctifying mean?* (Make holy) Have a few moments of silence and tell the students to ask the Holy Spirit to help them understand these words.

d) Tell the students to notice the preparation table the next time they go to church. Remind them to listen closely to the Divine Liturgy and to recall what they learned about the Lamb of God.

e) Complete the reading. Have the students work in groups and ask them to list all the words they think about when they hear the words *Lamb of God*.

Supplemental Activity

Write a prayer to the Lamb of God. Either have the students work separately or in groups. Explain that prayers can thank God and/or praise God.

Let the students print their prayers on construction paper, and place them around the room or use them for the closing prayer.



The Divine Liturgy
Saint John called Jesus "Lamb of God" at His Baptism in the Jordan River and prepared us for the sacrifice Jesus will make for us. The words Lamb of God that Saint John used to identify Jesus Christ are part of every Divine Liturgy.

Before the Divine Liturgy, the priest prepares the bread and wine for Holy Communion. At the small preparation table to the left of the Holy Table, the priest prays as he cuts the prosphora. The priest cuts from the prosphora a square that is called the Lamb. The priest pierces the upper left corner of the Lamb in remembrance of Jesus being pierced with a spear at the Crucifixion. In this preparation the priest is recalling the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus. Every time the priest prepares the prosphora and cuts the Lamb for Holy Communion, he recalls Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection that gained for us eternal life.

The priest prays these words as he prepares to give us Holy Communion: "Broken and distributed is the Lamb of God—broken and not divided, always eaten and never consumed—but sanctifying those who partake."

And so at every Divine Liturgy, we remember Saint John's words at Jesus' Baptism, and we know that Jesus will have to sacrifice His life to save us.

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Background Reading

(The Divine Liturgy)

"Christ's self-offering is the heart of the New Covenant. Uniting with Him in His eternal oblation is the Church's holiest act. This is why the Eucharist is the greatest of the mysteries; through it we become part of the world's salvation. It is also the most decisive exercise of the Church's priesthood. We are 'A kingdom of priests to serve our God' (Rv 5:10) and it is in the Liturgy that we perform our most vital service. Here is the profound truth behind the statement of the Moscow Patriarch who, when asked to describe his Church, said, 'We are a Church that celebrates the Divine Liturgy'" (ID 103).

8. Action Plan (8 minutes)

Allow time for the students to complete each section. Then ask them to choose one of their answers to read aloud in class.

9. Summary (12 minutes)

Materials: Come Bless the Lord Theophany icon

Ask the students to divide into three groups.

1. Group one presents a short skit showing what happened on the day of Jesus' Baptism.
2. Group two teaches us about the details in the icon of Theophany.
3. Group three uses the information from Lesson 8 and shows us how the prosphora is prepared for Holy Communion.

Give each group time to prepare before they do their presentation.

10. Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Pray the troparion and kontakion for the feast.

(Prayer page)

Supplemental Activity

If possible, arrange to have the class sit in the front of the church for the blessing of the water.

Action Plan

Feast of Theophany

I. Our Church gives us the custom of blessing water on the Feast of Theophany. We are honoring the Baptism of Jesus. In some places the people gather around a local river, lake or ocean, and the priest blesses the waters of nature as a symbol of the blessing of the Jordan River. On the following lines, write how blessed water reminds us of Baptism.

We remember Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan River

II. In some churches, the priest goes to the house and prays for the people. He blesses the house with holy water. Even if the priest does not go to your house, you can still bless your house with holy water. On the following lines, write a prayer that you can say as you sprinkle blessed water throughout your house.

III. List three rooms that you will bless in your house. Explain why you want to bless these rooms.

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Troparion for the Feast of Theophany

At Your baptism in the Jordan,
O Lord, the worship of the Trinity
was revealed; for the Father's voice
bore witness to You by calling You
His beloved Son and the Spirit in
the form of a dove confirmed the
truth of His words. O Christ God
who have appeared to us and
enlightened the world, glory to
You!

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church

Kontakion for the Feast of the Theophany

Today You have appeared, O Lord,
to the universe and Your light, O
Christ our God, has been impressed
upon us who sing to You with full
knowledge: You came and appeared,
O inaccessible Light.

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church

Troparion for the Feast of Theophany

When Thou wert baptized in the
Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the
Trinity manifested itself; for the
voice of the Father acknowledged
Thee calling Thee beloved Son and
the Spirit in the form of a dove
attested to the truth of the Word.
Thou who didst reveal Thyself, O
Christ God and didst enlighten the
world, glory to Thee!

The Romanian Greek Catholic
Diocese of Canton

Kontakion for the Feast of the Theophany

Thou didst reveal Thyself to the
world today and Thy light, Lord,
was signed upon us who in
acknowledgement praise Thee:
Thou didst come and show Thyself,
the unapproachable Light.

The Romanian Greek Catholic
Diocese of Canton

Troparion for the Feast of Theophany

At Your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the Father's voice bore witness to You, calling You His beloved Son and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God who appeared and enlightened the world, glory be to You!

The Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic
Metropolitan Province

Kontakion for the Feast of the Theophany

You have revealed Yourself to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has shined upon us. We recognize You and exclaim to You: You have come and revealed Yourself, O inaccessible Light.

The Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic
Metropolitan Province

Troparion for the Feast of Theophany

At Your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the voice of the Father bore You witness by calling You beloved Son and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, You manifest Yourself and enlighten the world; glory to You!

The Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of
Saint Josaphat

Kontakion for the Feast of the Theophany

Today You manifest Yourself to the universe and Your light, O Lord, shines upon us. And in our understanding rightly do we sing out to You: O inaccessible Light, You have come and manifested Yourself.

The Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of
Saint Josaphat

Troparion for the Feast of Theophany

At Your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the Father's voice bore witness to You, calling You His beloved Son and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, who appeared and enlightened the world; glory be to You!

The Ukrainian Catholic Synod

Kontakion for the Feast of the Theophany

You have revealed Yourself to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has shined upon us. We recognize You and exclaim to You: You have come and revealed Yourself, O inaccessible Light.

The Ukrainian Catholic Synod