



# *A Jordan River Experience*

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## **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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### **Opening Prayer**

*Take a few moments of silence and perhaps play a song of your choice.  
Invite one person to pray or pray as a group.*

Heavenly Father,  
we come together this week  
confident that you are among us.  
Send your Holy Spirit to guide us,  
and open our eyes  
to see the Spirit at work in our own lives.  
In your name we pray.  
Amen.

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### **Faith in Action**

*Take a few moments to give all an opportunity to share progress on last week's action.*

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### **Scripture: John 1:29-34**

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### **Catch a Phrase**

*Take a few moments to savor a word, a question, or a feeling that rises up in you. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.*

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### **Reflection**

Today's reading is quite different from most of the other gospel passages we read throughout the year. In it, Jesus does very little. We read that John sees Jesus "coming toward him." That's it. We hear no parables, we see no angry outbursts in the temple. No one

is fed, healed, saved from a storm, rid of a demon, or raised from the dead. Strolling up to John is Jesus' only physical involvement in the story. Our teacher today isn't Jesus, but John, and the Baptist's experience in the reading has much to tell us about the way we as Christians experience God.

The verses before our passage reveal that John is famous by the time we meet him. So famous, in fact, that the religious leaders of Jerusalem sent messengers to ask him whether he was the messiah. The reading begins with John at the Jordan River. He is baptizing, doing the work he has been doing every day for some time, and he sees Jesus in the ordinary act of walking to the river. And yet John bursts into praise as Jesus draws near. Why? Because on this regular day, above the seemingly regular man approaching him, John sees something extraordinary: the Spirit of God moving through the world in a way that he can see.

Precious few of us get to see 'the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove'. In a way, John's Jordan River experience is how most Christians experience God's presence in the world. God is often revealed through ordinary means. The sacraments all use common elements—bread and wine, water and oil—as the means by which we encounter Christ today. And God moves in our lives through our families, communities, and others.

We might think, "I don't go around baptizing people in my daily life, though. And no one would send messengers to ask if I am the messiah. How can I experience the Spirit moving in an ordinary life like mine?" When we have thoughts like these, it is helpful to remember that John the Baptist didn't consider his own life with the same reverence we do. Twice in our short reading, John modestly specifies that he baptizes "with water," a small deed when compared to Jesus' baptizing "with the Holy Spirit." Doing outstanding things isn't our job as Christians. Our job is to do ordinary things, and watch for the Spirit to do great things through us.

Subtly but powerfully, the Holy Spirit dwells in our daily lives and reveals God in the world around us. We can see this, as John did, if we learn how to look: sitting quietly in our dorm room, listening, brings comfort to a broken-hearted friend; a kind word before class

gives a classmate strength for a dreaded presentation; a tiny service group brings food and hope to some people in need. Again and again, actions we perform every day, often without realizing we're doing them, have consequences greater than we expect or intend. Our surroundings, too, reveal God. We are nourished by food grown in the earth, we enjoy the cheerful company of others, we experience the amazing gift of life each day. If we learn how to look, we too can have Jordan River experiences. Every day, the Spirit reveals to us the presence of the Lamb of God.

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### Questions for Reflection

- How do I see the Holy Spirit moving in the lives of the people around me, especially those I admire? What experience can I share of someone in whom I see the Spirit?
  - Have there been situations in my life through which, as I look back on them, the Holy Spirit seemed to be working? Where can I see the Spirit working in my life today? How might I act differently in my daily life, if I kept in mind that the Holy Spirit works through even my most ordinary actions?
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### Beckoned to Action

*Choose an action for the coming week. If possible, have the action response flow from your own thoughts and sharing. The following are suggestions:*

- Begin or end each day this week with five to ten minutes of open and receptive prayer. During this time, do not say anything to God. Rather, clear your mind and simply listen. You will quickly find your mind wandering! Pay attention to what bubbles up into your mind during this time. Ask God for help in seeing the Spirit at work in your life each day.
- Do something out of the ordinary this week—join a club, start a conversation with someone you don't normally talk to, or volunteer. Pay attention to how the Spirit moves in this new environment. Share your experiences with the group next week.
- Find out if your campus has the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process. If so, commit to praying for a specific person who is going through the process and tell them you are

praying for them. If not, ask your campus minister how you might become involved in helping to start the process on campus.

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## **Closing Prayer**

*Invite one person to pray or pray together.*

Loving Father,  
help us to appreciate better  
the great gift of  
of our own baptism.

May our renewed  
awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit  
in our lives  
encourage us to act more compassionately and lovingly.

This we ask in your name.

Amen.

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## **Looking Ahead**

*Prepare for your next gathering by prayerfully reviewing the Scripture reading and Reflection for the next session as identified by your Small Community Leader.*