



Archdiocese of Dublin
Education Secretariat

Post-Primary Diocesan Advisers R.E. News Blog - February 2022

Dear Chaplain and R.E. Teacher,

For most of us in Ireland, February is a time of hope, of new beginnings, of looking forward. Brave snowdrops dot the wintry earth, green shoots of daffodils emerge from hardened soil, the air is somewhat softer and even the days seem to grow longer. All of these in their differing ways seem to whisper "Wait"... brighter days are very near, winter will end and another springtime awaits us.



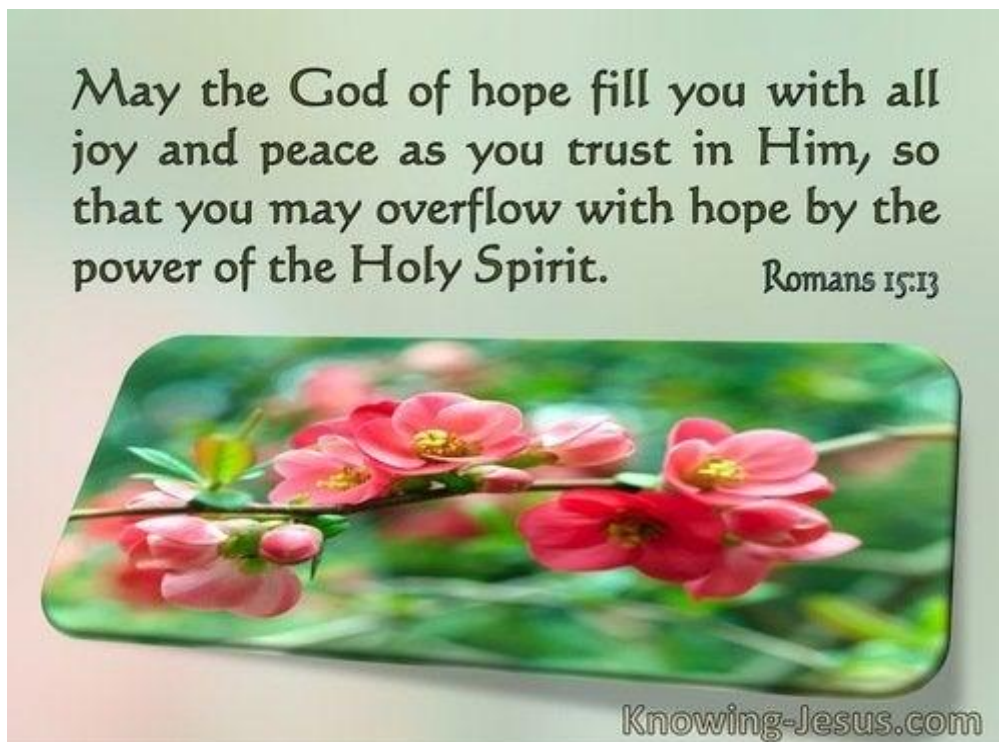
At this time, a special sign of renewal and new life in the church lies in its call to grow into a Synodal Church. We are invited to explore what a Synodal Church might look like. Pope Francis suggests three characteristics, which he hopes will shine out of our renewed church:

- A church where diversity is celebrated - *"Walls do not and should not exist in the Catholic Church... for the Church is a common home, a place of relationships and of coexistence in diversity."*
- A church, which is humble - *"A Synodal Church is able to listen and learn from others and admit mistakes. The way of the Lord is always the way of meekness, of littleness, of kenosis."*
- A church, which is prophetic – Pope Francis wants to *"model a Church that shares the pain of the suffering poor of our world, refugees and migrants."* He wants us all *"to share their pain and support their needs and rights."*

Liturgical Calendar

Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe Diocese has created a series of short, spiritual reflections, Celebrating 300 Messages of Faith, Hope, Light and Inspiration which are available on YouTube. These reflections are in line with the Liturgical Calendar.

In the Liturgical Calendar for February, we meet four different women all of whom knew how to wait in hope. They knew how to be open to all, how to exclude no one and how to be humble and yet prophetic. Theirs was an openness that was often born out of suffering and found expression in songs of gladness, in a simplicity of life, lived in total gift of self and in service to others. These women are Brigid of Ireland, Anna of Israel, Josephine of Sudan in Africa and Bernadette of Nevers in Lourdes, France. Each one of them, like the signs of a returning Spring, are voices of hope echoing down the centuries from differing corners of our earth. Like Mary, they trusted that the promise made to them would be fulfilled. Listen, they seem to say, wait, trust, hope, do not be afraid, the Lord is faithful and will not disappoint. As we move into this month of February may we, like these four women, listen to the promises made to us, believing that they too will be fulfilled in our lives.



As Diocesan Advisers, we look forward to being able to visit you soon. We thank God for His continued protection of our families and our school communities during this time of pandemic.

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February 1 - St. Brigid



Saint Brigid, Naomh Bríd, Muire na nGael, is one of Ireland's earliest saints and has been venerated as our co-patron/ess of Ireland with St. Patrick and St. Colmcille. Her feastday is celebrated on the first day of February, the supposed day of her death. Brigid, Carer of the Earth, is known as a woman of compassion, contemplation, gentleness, inspiration and strength.

She is known for her generous spirit, her hospitality and welcome for all. She stood up for what she believed in and displayed the courage to speak out when necessary. She formed the first Christian Community of women in Ireland dedicated to prayer, to the service of all those in any kind of need and to preaching the gospel.

Brigid was a prophet, a woman of the earth and a patroness of healing. There is a tradition of placing a piece of cloth outdoors on the eve of 1 February when it is said that Brigid touches it with healing dew, which can protect us during the year ahead.

We are told that Brigid's faith and hope were nourished by the beauty of nature and by seeing the great deeds God worked through her.

Wells sprang up wherever she went - springs of healing and of hope, many of them still flowing today. Brigid used the simple reeds / green rushes around her to weave her famous cross and lead her people into the mystery at the heart of Christian hope.

The cross of St. Brigid is based on the simple cross of reeds which tradition says Brigid used when teaching the truths of the Catholic faith. The tradition of the Brigid's cross - Cros Bhríde - is said to have originated while explaining the crucifixion and the message of salvation to a dying man. According to tradition, a new cross is woven each St. Brigid's Day. The old cross is burned to protect the house from fire, although customs vary.

May we, as educators, be creative, resourceful and wise as Brigid as we lead our young people in their journey of faith. We ask St. Brigid to keep us from harm and enable us to keep alive that hope which sustained her.

Bríd i mo chrois
Muire 's a Mac
Bríd ' Is a brat.
Má 's fear atá sibh anocht,
Go mba seacht bhfearr a bheidh sibh
Blain ó anocht.

Brigid, Mary and her Son, bless all here.
May you be seven times better than you are now
This time next year.

" Anois teach an earraigh,
Beidh an lá ag dul chun síneadh,
Is tar éis na Féile Bhríde,
Árdóidh mé mo shaol"

Spring has come.
The days are getting longer
And after Brigid's Day,
I can hoist my sails again.

- 'Cill Aodáin' by Antaine Ó Raifteirí

Instructions for Weaving the Brigid's Cross can be found on <https://brigidine.org.au>



Traditional prayer when hanging the Brigid's Cross:

"May the blessing of God and the Trinity be on this cross
And be on the home where it hangs
And on everyone who looks at it"

For Upcoming Events at Solas Bhríde – <https://solasbhríde.ie>

**Féile Bríde 2022: Brigid: Flame of Justice and Peace, January 31 – February 6,
Kildare Town, Kildare.**



February 2 - Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple



The story of the Presentation is told in the Gospel of Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

This feast, celebrated by the Christian Churches, has also been called “Candlemas Day” because candles are blessed and lit this day on which Simeon called Jesus “a light to the Gentiles”.

We meet the prophetess Anna, who spent a lifetime waiting in the Temple, night and day, in the hope of seeing the promised One of God. Her hope was not in vain. The moment Mary entered the Temple with the Infant Jesus, Anna recognised the one she and all the people of Israel had so long awaited and she praised God. Her work was done, she had welcomed her Messiah and she praised the God who keeps his promise.

May we, too, be graced with the wisdom to discern God’s presence within and around us. Like Anna, may we know how to wait without giving up until God chooses to reveal Himself to us.

The Presentation of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Hgycmwzw1k>

February 3 - St. Blaise



There is no accurate historical evidence about St. Blaise's life. St. Blaise, a bishop and martyr from the third century, is the patron saint of diseases. He was born into a wealthy family and received a Christian education. Legend has it that Blaise was a physician, a healer, and that he sometimes healed those with ailments of the throat.

According to tradition, Blaise retreated to a cave and became a hermit. While there, he befriended some wild animals and cared for them. One day, Blaise was captured by hunters with the intention of putting him into prison. Whilst on this journey to prison, Blaise encountered a woman whose little boy was choking to death on a fishbone. Blaise healed him and the blessing of the throats on the 3rd February derives from that story. Blaise was delivered to the Governor and beheaded.

As we remember Blaise, we think of all those working in health care in these times of pandemic: the nurses, doctors, carers, scientists, chemists, cooks and orderlies who are working so hard to care for us. Bless them with renewed energy and knowledge.

Legend associates Blaise with throats. We pray too for those who have no voice in our society: the homeless, the migrant, the refugee, the elderly, the hungry and those with no family to support them.

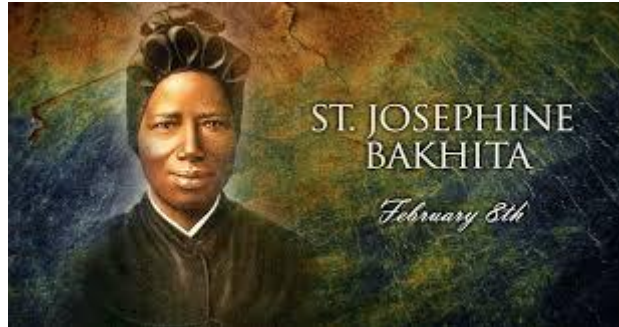
As educators, we have a duty to give a voice to the students we teach even if listening to that voice at times is not a comfortable experience for us.

Archbishop Eamon Martin's message for New Year 2022

Perhaps we could reflect on the words of Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh in his New Year's address: *"A fitting New Year's resolution for all of us in the Church and society, might be to invest more of our time and resources, listening, dialogue and prayer in our young people who are already making it clear that they see themselves not just as our future, but also as essential and creative contributors to our present."*

February 8 – St. Josephine Bakhita

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking



We celebrate the Feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, patron Saint of Victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, a crime that is as much a blight in our time as it was in hers. Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born in Western Sudan. Her family was reasonably well off. Slave traders of Sudan snatched Josephine when she was around seven years old and by the age of twenty she had been sold many times. Flogging and maltreatment were part of her daily life until she found herself in the employment of an Italian family who brought her back to Italy. Another family employed her, where she experienced kindness, respect, peace and joy. She was declared a free person by Italian law. She joined the Cannosian Sisters, came to know the God of Peace, and spent the rest of her life witnessing to His love through simple tasks. She died in 1947 and she was canonised on the 1st October, 2000.

Josephine is an African woman who speaks to one of the greatest social evils of our time. Today, we can remember all those affected by the crimes of modern slavery and human trafficking and the people who volunteer and work to eradicate this crime.

Background on St. Josephine Bakhita, prayer and reflection.

CAFOD – <https://cafod.org.uk>

February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes



It is now one hundred and sixty four years since a young, uneducated Bernadette saw Our Lady for the first time. Mary told Bernadette during one of the 18 apparitions that she was

the Immaculate Conception. She also told her to drink from the water which she caused to spring out of the hard jagged rock beneath Bernadette's feet. So many hundreds of thousands of people travel to Lourdes each year to drink from that same well... they come in search of wholeness, of healing and of peace.

We can drink deeply of the source of life offered to us in scripture, in the sacraments, in the connectedness that springs up in the silence of our hearts when we turn to God in prayer.

With Bernadette, we honour Mary and pray,

"A Mhuire Mháthair, Sé seo mo ghuí, Go maire Íosa, Go deo im' chroí"
O Mother Mary, this is my wish that Jesus lives forever in my heart.

World Day of the Sick, 11 February 2022

Thirty years ago, St. John Paul II instituted the World Day of the Sick to encourage us to be increasingly attentive to the sick and to those who care for them.

The Thirtieth World Day of the Sick – whose closing celebration, due to the pandemic, will not take place as planned in Arequipa, Peru, but in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE THIRTIETH WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

February 11, 2022

Pope Francis, in his message when releasing World Day of the Sick, 2022 reflected on various aspects of "mercy" starting with the "mercy" of the Father.

1. Merciful like the Father

"The theme chosen for this Thirtieth World Day of the Sick, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36), makes us first turn our gaze towards God, who is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4); he always watches over his children with a father's love, even when they turn away from him."

2. Jesus, the mercy of the Father

"The supreme witness of the Father's merciful love for the sick is his only-begotten Son. How often do the Gospels relate Jesus' encounters with people suffering from various diseases! We do well to ask ourselves why Jesus showed such great concern for the sick, so much so that he made it paramount in the mission of the apostles, who were sent by the Master to proclaim the Gospel and to heal the sick." (cf. Lk 9:2).

3. To touch the suffering flesh of Christ

"Jesus' invitation to be merciful like the Father has particular significance for healthcare workers. I think of all those physicians, nurses, laboratory technicians, the support staff and the caretakers of the sick, as well as the numerous volunteers who donate their precious time to assist those who suffer".

"I think especially of people in the poorest areas of our planet, where it is sometimes necessary to travel long distances to find treatment centres that, albeit with limited resources, offer what is available. We still have a long way to go; in some countries, access to adequate care remains a luxury. We see this, for example, in the scarcity of available vaccines against Covid-19 in poor countries; but even more in the lack of treatment for illnesses that require much simpler medicines".

4. Centres of care as "houses of mercy"

"The World Day of the Sick is also a good occasion to focus our attention on centres of care. Down the centuries, showing mercy to the sick led the Christian community to open innumerable "inns of the good Samaritan", where love and care can be given to people with various kinds of sickness, especially those whose health needs are not being met due to poverty or social exclusion or to the difficulties associated with treating certain pathologies".

"I think especially of people in the poorest areas of our planet, where it is sometimes necessary to travel long distances to find treatment centres that, albeit with limited resources, offer what is available. We still have a long way to go; in some countries, access to adequate care remains a luxury. We see this, for example, in the scarcity of available vaccines against Covid-19 in poor countries; but even more in the lack of treatment for illnesses that require much simpler medicines".

5. Pastoral mercy: presence and proximity

"In the past thirty years, pastoral health care has also seen its indispensable service increasingly recognized. If the worst discrimination suffered by the poor – including the sick, who are poor in health – is the lack of spiritual attention, we cannot fail to offer them God's closeness, his blessing and his word, as well as the celebration of the sacraments and the opportunity for a journey of growth and maturation in faith".

"Dear brothers and sisters, to the intercession of Mary, Health of the Infirm, I entrust all the sick and their families. United with Christ, who bears the pain of the world, may they find meaning, consolation and trust. I pray for healthcare workers everywhere, that, rich in mercy, they may offer patients, together with suitable care, their fraternal closeness".

To all I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Francis

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 10 December 2021, Memorial of Our Lady of Loreto.

February 14 - St. Valentine

St. Valentine is the patron Saint of all who want to embark on the path of love, all who want to live their lives in a commitment to loving God, loving each other and to supporting each other in this endeavour. Love has many names and many expressions. We see it in the eyes of a young mother and of an old man, in the struggles of the young family, in the volunteer or missionary far from home. Love has many faces and is indeed “a many splendored thing.” On this day, we celebrate our relationships. To all of us Valentine would say “Keep your commitment alive, renew it, stick with it... don’t be afraid, God is with you no matter what”!

Valentine is venerated in a special way in Whitefriar Street Church, where his relics have reposed since 1836.



Liturgically, the month of February draws to a close very quietly. Perhaps this gives us an opportunity to allow seeds of hope from these great women, Brigid, Anna, Josephine and Bernadette as well as the greatest of all Mary, mother of Jesus, to take root in our lives.

It might be an opportune time to reflect on the newly emerging church characterised by diversity, humility, courage and prophetic voice.

A Thought a Day with Frank Duff: Punctuality – “Without punctuality, the Lord’s command ‘Set your house in order’ (Is 38:1) cannot be fulfilled. The principle of punctuality and order must apply to everything from beginning to end”.

Simply Synod - A New Way to be Church together - A Call to Change



The Catholic Church in Ireland is seeking to take part in a Synodal Pathway of journeying together, listening, discussing and discerning what the Holy Spirit at this time is asking of us.

The purpose of the Synod is to “plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearths, give strength to our hands.” ***Pope Francis, Address at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People (October 2018).***

We are asked to reflect and find creative means in order to involve children and youth. We are encouraged to involve young people in e-synodal meetings, keeping in mind the different age groups. **(Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission)**

In the Synodal Pathway, we are invited to reflect on two questions:

- How is this ‘journeying together’ happening in our particular situation?
- What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

(Resource for the Synodal Pathway Diocesan Phase, Archdiocese of Dublin)

Archbishop Dermot Farrell has said: “We need to open up a new chapter in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Change is never easy and there will be conflicts, disagreements and tensions.” He has also said that “Pope Francis is offering us a new way of being church, the synodal pathway, of walking together more closely and being a church that is hope-filled, despite many challenges”.

For more on the Synodal Pathway, visit <https://www.catholicbishops.ie> and www.synod.va and <https://dublindiocese.ie/prayer-for-the-synod-adsumus-sancte-spiritus/> (Synod Prayer)

Building Hope - Task Force Report - Archdiocese of Dublin



The Building Hope Task Force was set up by Archbishop Farrell to build hope for the future of the Dublin Archdiocese. The report of the Task Force, *Communities of Faith*, states that “Young people can take on a greater role in pastoral outreach. This can best be achieved through youth-to-youth ministry that engages young people as they are now.”

“We cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it.” ***Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 64***

Young People: the Now of God

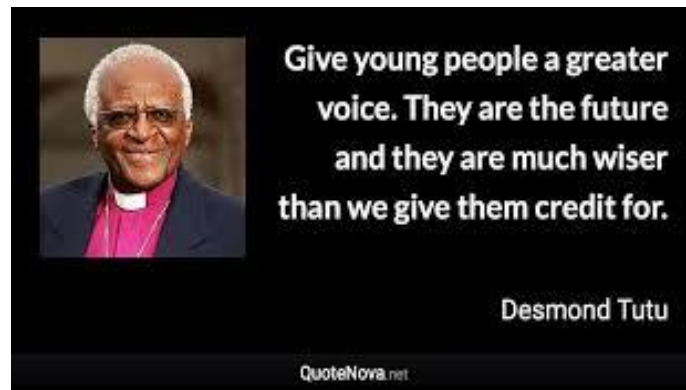
Ronan Barry addresses the context of working with young people.

Feature: The Sacred Heart Messenger, February 2022.

“Pope Francis has remarked that young people are the ‘Now of God’. Ronan Barry asks, “What does this mean”? He says that Pope Francis is asking us to change our perspective.

“As adults we want to lead young people to an understanding of the Christian life. However, as adults, we often fail to recognise that God is already present in the lives of young people. As a faith community it is our job to travel with young people and discover God with them”.

Ronan Barry



‘Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!’

Christus Vivit of Pope Francis to young people and to the entire people of God.

Other Important Dates/Information to Note!

Laethanta Tábhachtacha eile/Eolas le Meabhrú!

Archdiocese of Dublin /Ard-Dheoise Bhaile Átha Cliath

See the Archdiocese of Dublin website for information on events, which take place throughout the diocese. <http://www.dublindiocese.ie/>

11th February: International Day of Women and Girls in Science

Lá Idirnáisiúnta na mBan agus na gCailíní san Eolaíocht

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/women-and-girls-in-science-day>

20th February: World Day of Social Justice

Lá Domhanda Tiomnaithe do Cheartas Sóisialta

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/social-justice-day>

27th February: Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Most Important Appointment in the Week: Anyone who is really seeking Jesus’ friendship responds as often as possible to Jesus’ invitation to the feast.

<https://www.cdowcym.org/documents/resources/YOUCAT.pdf>

Pope Francis' Message

The Pope Video

The Pope Video is an official global initiative to disseminate the Holy Father's monthly intentions. It is carried out by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer). The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network is a Pontifical Society, with the mission of mobilizing Catholics through prayer and action in response to the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church. These challenges are presented in the form of prayer intentions entrusted by the Pope to the entire Church. The foundation's mission is inscribed in the dynamic of the Heart of Jesus, a mission of compassion for the world. It was founded in 1844 as the Apostleship of Prayer. It is present in 89 countries and is made up of more than 22 million Catholics. It includes a youth branch, the EYM: Eucharistic Youth Movement. In December 2020, the Pope constituted this Pontifical Society as a Vatican Foundation and approved its new statutes. Its international director is Fr. Frédéric Fornos, SJ. For more information, visit: popesprayer.va

<https://thepopevideo.org/videos-2022/#>

The Family is Good News by Pope Francis

The Family is Good News comprises a selection of specially chosen extracts from *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation devoted to the subject of love in the family, the bedrock of Christianity. This reader-friendly compilation is the result of the Council for Marriage and the Family collaborating in a reflective process with married couples, single people, parents, grandparents, lay and cleric.

<https://www.veritasbooksonline.com/the-family-is-good-news-9781847308429-40638/>

Catholic Education Partnership *formerly Catholic Schools Partnership*

The Catholic Education Partnership's new website is now live at this link:

www.catholiceducation.ie

Check out their resources and if you have interesting articles or information/news that you would like to share please feel free to contact Gillian at gmcgrath@catholiceducation.ie

YOUCAT topics to provoke a classroom discussion:

<https://www.cdowcym.org/documents/resources/YOUCAT.pdf>

86 *Why did Jesus wait thirty years to begin his public life?*

Jesus wanted to share a normal life with us and thus sanctify our everyday routine. [531-534, 564]

Jesus was a child who received love and affection from his parents and was brought up by them. Thus he increased "in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:52); he belonged to a Jewish village community and took part in its religious rituals; he learned a trade and had to prove his ability as a craftsman. The fact that God in Jesus willed to be born into a human family and to grow up in it has made the family a place where God is present and a prototype of a helping community.

87 Why did Jesus allow John to baptize him, although he was without sin?

To baptize means to immerse. In his baptism, Jesus descended into the sinful history of all mankind. By doing so he established a sign. In order to redeem us from our sins, he would one day be submerged in death but, through his Father's power, reawakened to life. [535-537, 565]

Sinners—soldiers, prostitutes, tax collectors—went out to the prophet John the Baptist because they were looking for the “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 3:3). Strictly speaking, Jesus did not need this baptism, because he was sinless. The fact that he submitted to this baptism shows us two things: Jesus takes our sins upon himself. Jesus understands his baptism as an anticipation of his Passion and Resurrection. At this sign of his willingness to die for us, the heavens open: “You are my beloved Son” (Lk 3:22b).

88 Why was Jesus led into temptation? Could he really be tempted at all?

Jesus was truly human, and as part of that he was truly susceptible to temptation. In Jesus Christ we do not have the sort of redeemer “who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning” (Heb 4:15). [538-540, 566]

89 To whom does Jesus promise “the kingdom of God”?

God wills “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). The “kingdom of God” begins in those who allow themselves to be transformed by God's love. In Jesus' experience these are above all the poor and the lowly. [541-546, 567]

Even people unaffiliated with the Church find it fascinating that Jesus, with a sort of preferential love, turns first to those who are socially marginalized. In the Sermon on the Mount, it is the poor and the sorrowing, the victims of persecution and violence, all those who seek God with a pure heart, all who seek his mercy, his justice, and his peace, who have prior access to the kingdom of God. Especially invited are sinners also: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk 2:17).

90 Did Jesus work miracles, or are they just pious tales?

Jesus really worked miracles, and so did the →APOSTLES. The New Testament authors refer to real incidents. [547-550]

Even the oldest sources tell of numerous miracles, even the raising of the dead, as a confirmation of Jesus' preaching: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt 12:28). The miracles took place in public; some of the persons involved were known by name, for instance, blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52) or Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14- 15). There were also miracles that in those Jewish circles were considered shocking and outrageous (for example, the cure of a crippled man on the →SABBATH, the cure of lepers). Nevertheless they were not disputed by contemporary Judaism.

<https://www.cdowcym.org/documents/resources/YOUCAT.pdf>