

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday After the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Epiphany: Shimmering glimpses of the abundance of the Kingdom of God. Perhaps we, too, noticed a star and followed it. Or maybe someone led us to the gift of faith. Now we take the Light – the Good News – out into the world. Will others see the light shimmering in us? Will they risk taking a journey into faith with us?

A notation for this week's Gospel

"I have called you by name, you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1) Jesus had probably heard these words before seeking baptism from John the Baptist. As Jesus comes up out of the water, we have a hint of the working of the Trinity – a true ministry of collaboration. Jesus prays, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove, and the Voice calls him by name.

Theme: Called by name

Before Class: Look at the Baptismal service in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 299-308, particularly the prayer prayed over the newly baptized on page 308. Gather art supplies: paper, crayons, and possibly glitter. (If by any chance there will be a baptism at your church and you and the children can attend, do that instead of the lesson. When you return to your class; if you do, invite the children to illustrate what they saw and talk about it with you.)

Materials: We suggest you purchase a couple of yards of white tulle or other gauzy-type fabric to use as a prop in several of the stories in Epiphany. (You can find this at fabric stores or hobby shops) You could cut off a thin strip, lengthwise, and cut that strip into pieces for each child.

Beginning: Tell the children that God has always known each of them, even before each was born when each was just a tiny little batch of cells in their mother's body. God knows who you are. When you are baptized, your godparents and parents say your name aloud. Now God and all the rest of us know the name your parents have given you.

Praying: Thank you God for knowing each of us by name and blessing us with your spirit. Amen.

The Story: John the Baptist had been telling people they needed to be baptized. Lots of people were coming to hear John and then go into the river to be baptized. (You might ask the children if we go into a river to be baptized. John did not have a church to baptize people like we do - so they used a river instead.) Jesus saw all the people going into the river to be baptized and Jesus went into the river, too, and was baptized by John. As he came up out of the river, he could hear God's voice telling him that God was pleased with

Jesus. People could see a dove come down from the sky and fly right above Jesus' head. The Holy Spirit sometimes shows up as a dove. Today, when we are baptized, we hear the priest say: "N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. *Amen.*"

Option: Let's see if we can act out this story. If you have the length of material, it can become the river. Invite children to play the parts of John the Baptist, Jesus, and other people getting baptized. Take turns, retelling the story as needed, so each child who wants to can play any of the parts.

Activity: Give the children paper, crayons, glitter (if you have chosen to offer it), and possibly even-sized scraps of the material and some glue. Invite them to illustrate the Baptism of Jesus. Or, if you have been able to see a baptism in your church today, invite them to illustrate that baptism.

Getting Closure: Gather the children into a circle. Tell them that at baptism, the priest makes the sign of the cross on the head of each person being baptized and says these words: "N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. *Amen.*" (Make the sign of the cross on your head as you tell them.) Ask for a child to volunteer to make the sign of the cross on your head, just as you did, while all of you say together: "N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. *Amen.*" Then ask if any child wants to have the sign "marked" on their head. Take turns so each child who wants to receive the sign and each child who wants to make the sign on another's head may have a chance.

Closing Prayer: Blessed God, we give thanks for being sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and that we belong to you forever. Amen.

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