

Session One – The Baptism of Jesus. This painting by the Dominican Fra Angelico (1438-45)

1.	The Sky, the Heavens, the Skyline	We see the cloud and the dove. <i>From the passage of Holy Scripture, we know the voice of God the Father is heard from above while the dove represents the Holy Spirit descending to dwell in Christ.</i>
2.	The Soil and the Earth (landscape)	The river seems to be breaking through a very bleak and barren landscape. Although much of humankind had forgotten our Creator God, Christ came to earth becoming like us in all but sin to heal the hardened hearts of all. Just as the Israelites crossed the River Jordan into the promised land, Jesus entered the Jordan to be baptised so that through him all humanity would have the opportunity to be with him forever – the promise of eternal life. <i>In the painting, the water seems to be flowing out to meet us, inviting us into the life of the Blessed Trinity.</i>
3.	Structure, Architecture Composition (e.g. proportion and placement of persons within the composition)	Christ, the dove and the cloud are central to the painting. The Blessed Trinity, the central doctrine of our faith is made clear: God the Father (revealing himself via a voice in the cloud) lovingly speaks to his Son (Christ) through the power of the Holy Spirit (made visible as a dove). <i>At our baptism, we become a part of God's family, adopted sons and daughters of the Father. We are united in Christ and bestowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.</i>
4.	Subjects, especially People	Besides Christ, St John the Baptist, St Dominic, our Blessed Mother and two angels are represented. The prophet, St John the Baptist was calling people to turn back to God, to express sorrow for their sins. Jesus took on our sins as part of God's plan for our salvation: to restore the opportunity to be with him for all eternity. <i>The angels are holding both the old garment (Original Sin) and the new white garment, the sign of our vocation to Christ-like living. The saints are our role models.</i>
5.	Shades and Colours	St John the Baptism is dressed in red (a sign of martyrdom) while Jesus is in white, a sign of purity. <i>United with Christ, we wear white at our baptism.</i>
6.	Specific Symbols	Christ's halo with a Cross points to his death.

