

The Baptism of Christ the second Sunday of Epiphany

Many of us here today would have been baptized as babies and obviously will not remember anything about it. From a Vicars point perhaps it is as well that it is mostly young children and babies. Some adults might react rather differently to having cold water splashed on their heads

But I would imagine being baptised in later life is so fulfilling because not only does Baptism move us away from Sin but moves us to something new. Christian Baptism is the means in which We Confess faith in Christ, Jesus has cleansed my soul from sin, and I now have a new life of sanctification

This is totally captured when we hear what happened to Jesus during his own baptism and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a Dove. And a voice came from heaven "You are my Dearest Son, in you I take great delight" "Such beautiful words to read and such a beautiful sight to witness.

Imagine being part of the crowd and witnessing this happening. It would confirm to the crowd that the words that John had spoken to them were indeed true "I baptize you with water but one more powerful than I am is coming I am not worthy to untie the straps of his sandals".

John is not describing some heavenly King but someone just like themselves wearing the same garments as them even down to the sandals on his feet.

Oh, to have been around to see this happen. You can almost feel the excitement amongst the crowd

Baptism is one of 2 Ordinances that Jesus instituted for the Church. In Matthew 28 19-20 we hear Jesus say before his Ascension "Go and make disciples of all Nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I am with you always to the very end of age.

As a Christian I find these words very comforting. We have been truly tried and tested these last couple of years with the ongoing pandemic. Trying to keep going has been the best some of us can do. In the Church our way of worship has had to change but we have adapted. Even us older ones have changed to a more technical way of meeting up and worshipping. And if that has not been possible, we have followed our Christian mission of reaching out to ones who have felt isolated. Visiting phoning delivering Church Newsletters so no one feels left out. Knowing Jesus is with us to the very end of age has spurred us on

And it is wonderful to see and hear how our Churches have had many requests for Baptisms I was involved in one Baptism and the words of the young unmarried Mum involved where music to my ears. She wanted her baby baptised now but on reaching the age of fourteen she would then make her own decisions on the way she wanted to go with her Faith She had also chosen the God parents wisely choosing people who would ensure her child's upbringing realising that some people in her life just come and go This from 17-year-old.

God parents are mentioned in the Bible only once I think although I am sure David will put me right

In Luke's gospel we hear Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea to give the good news to her cousin Elizabeth who was also pregnant

Elizabeth is filled with such happiness for Mary Telling her upon hearing Mary's news the child in her own womb jumped for joy. Mary proceeds to sing a song of gratitude and joy, from this great encouragement from her cousin

Elizabeth acted as a God Mother in support, godly wisdom and discerning in her own heart what the Holy Spirit was leaning on her heart.

Mary was also a young unmarried Mother and afraid and needed now more than ever a strong older woman for support. Mary was wise beyond her years very much like the young unmarried Mum I met.

So, as we stand at the beginning of a New Year the thought and deeds of these two young unmarried Mothers are a great comfort to me. We sometimes only see what we want to see but look around and all acts of goodness in the Form of God Mothers and God Fathers are all around us. We will continue as we have been going forward facing more challenges and more new goals. Some of us (me) will have made a list of resolutions many of which I will not keep

These following words are something I read and one resolution I will maintain. **Living into our baptism with a sense of our God Given mission.**

What we do not hear, explicitly anyway, but we do pick it up in verses leading up to Jesus emerging from the water is that Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of Jesus divine mission. Jesus is up to something, and I want to be part of it.

If this year continues in a similar way to the past 2 years, we need to continue with our God Given Mission. We need to look at our community and find the areas where help is needed. In this coming year for myself I want to be more outward looking , not using the Church as a crutch to follow my faith. I aim to try even harder to reach out to others Yes, a journey from Sin towards Purity and Holiness but recognising that life is not straightforward and know that I must look more towards God for guidance in my Baptismal journey

Amen