
The Churches of Saint Paul, St Aidan & St Modwen, Burton upon Trent

CLERGY

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Welcome to our weekly News sheet

SUNDAY 10th JANUARY 2021: THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

ALL THREE CHURCHES ARE CLOSED FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

ST MODWEN'S OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER : SATURDAY 10.00am – 12 noon

ST PAUL'S OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER : SUNDAY 9.30am – 11.00am

NOTES:

- 1 Church of England Children's Society Boxes to be handed in to Margaret Merry for emptying

COLLECT

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

HYMNS

When Jesus came to Jordan
To be baptized by John,
He did not come for pardon,
But as his Father's Son.
He came to share repentance
With all who mourn their sins,
To speak the vital sentence
With which good news begins.

He came to share temptation,
Our utmost woe and loss,
For us and our salvation
To die upon the cross.
So when the Dove descended
On him, the Son of Man,
The hidden years had ended,
The age of grace began.

Come, Holy Spirit, aid us
To keep the vows we make,
This very day invade us,
And every bondage break.
Come, give our lives direction,
The gift we covet most:
To share the resurrection
That leads to Pentecost.

1 Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord, to you we raise,
manifested by the star
to the sages from afar;
Branch of royal David's stem,
in your birth at Bethlehem
Anthems be to thee address,
God in man made manifest.

2 Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
and at Cana, wedding guest,
in your Godhead manifest,
you revealed your pow'r divine,
changing water into wine;
Anthems be to thee address,
God in man made manifest

3 Manifest in making whole
palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight,
quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will,
ever bringing good from ill:
Anthems be to thee address,
God in man made manifest

4 Sun and moon shall darkened be,
Stars shall fall, the heavens shall flee;
Christ will then like lightning shine,
All will see his glorious sign;
All will then the trumpet hear,
All will see the Judge appear:
Thou by all wilt be confest.
God in man made manifest.

5 Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
Mirrored in thy holy word;
May we imitate thee,
And be pure, as pure art thou;
That we like to thee may be
At thy great Epiphany;
And may praise thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied--altogether there were about twelve of them.

Mark 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

New Mandatory Ruling on Face Coverings: As of Saturday, 8th August 2020, face coverings in church will be mandatory for everyone other than those exempt from wearing them for medical reasons. Those leading the worship, reading, preaching, leading prayers, presiding at HC etc. will not have to wear face coverings where social distancing can be maintained. A face covering will be worn by the minister distributing Holy Communion due to the close proximity of the recipient.

PRAYERS

We rejoice in your presence and your love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You have made us, you have redeemed us, and you guide us. We remember in your presence all who are being prepared for baptism or confirmation: all who are seeking to know the gifts of your Spirit. We pray for our own clergy, Fr Phillip, Fr Robin and Fr Hamish and for all who are being prepared for ordination and ministry.

We pray for our country, for our government and for the scientists who have developed the vaccine against Coronavirus. As we pray for the world, we remember those who are seeking to bring peace and goodwill among all. We pray for those involved in war or the threat of war.

***God ever with us
Hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

We pray for the Burton three and we give thanks for the ministry of Fr Phillip, Fr Robin and Fr Hamish during our interregnum.

***God ever with us
Hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

We pray for all who are starting new work or new studies, for the newly married and the newly engaged, for all who are testing their vocations. We pray for all who seek to bring peace to our world.

***God ever with us
Hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

We give thanks for our homes and our loved ones, for our godparents and our godchildren. We ask your blessing upon them. We remember all who come from broken homes or who are suffering from broken relationships.

***God ever with us
Hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

We remember those who feel they have lost their way, who are troubled and distressed, that they may know your love and care. We remember also those who are ill at home or in hospital, all who are struggling at this time. We remember those on our parish prayer list - Sheila Farthing, Carolin Ellis, Margaret & Alan Ballard, Bill Somerville, Lucy Okoye, Michael Johnson, Julie, Hamish Ferguson-Stuart, Alison Parker, Chris Hill & Pauline Spalding.

***God ever with us
Hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

We praise you for giving us life and life eternal. We remember especially today our friends and loved ones who have enriched our lives but are now departed from this world, Audrey Smith, and those whose anniversary occurs at this time Eileen Underhill, Hilda Denson, Betty Morris and Laura Hawkes. We commend all to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

***God ever with us
Hear us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

**Merciful Father:
Accept these prayers
For the sake of your Son,
Our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Taken from Prayers of Intercession by David Adam

Beloved children: Bishop Michael's sermon for 10 January 2021
Epiphany 1 [Baptism of the Lord]:

The Gospel of Mark tells of the Baptism of Jesus two thousand years ago. I want to tell you about the baptism of my granddaughter Rosaline two and a bit years ago. Our daughter-in-law is Russian, and Rosaline was baptised in a little church in Russia near the Estonian border. It was a joyful celebration, with little Rosalinka sat in a huge tub as gallons of water were poured over her, she was drenched in oil, and a great feast was had by all. It was so different from the baptism of her grandfather –not me, but her Russian grandfather, 50 something years ago. That was in Soviet days, and Evgeni's grandmother knew that her daughter (his mother) would not approve, as a member of the Communist party. So she arranged for the priest to call in secret while her daughter was out at work, and he hurriedly baptised little Evgeny in the kitchen sink. Fast forward to two years ago, and Evgeny's mother's way of thinking had changed so much that it was actually she who arranged her own granddaughter's baptism.

That family understood what a precious gift baptism is in our lives. We sometimes take it for granted, but Mark puts the story of Jesus' baptism right at the start of his gospel, to underline its importance not just for the Lord but for us his followers. So what is it all about?

First of all, it is about a new creation, a starting all over again. There is something fresh here breaking into the world, breaking into our lives. Our readings this morning underline that by taking us back to the beginning of the whole Bible, to the opening verses of Genesis. There, in the dawn of time, was the deep water, sign and means of baptism. And over the face of the deep there hovered what some translations call 'a wind from God'. But the Hebrew word also means 'the Spirit of God' –there, right at the start, were water and the Spirit, just as the Holy Spirit hovered over Jesus like a dove as he came out from the waters of the Jordan. The story of creation happens all over again in the life of the Christ; and it happens all over again in the life of us Christians.

And then, that new creation is a gift. Like being born, this is not something we can arrange for ourselves, but only receive in gratitude. There is a power, a strength, a wisdom, a love from beyond that is poured upon us. This is the greatest of gifts given to us in creation, the uncreated gift of the Spirit who is God. In the reading from Acts 19 appointed for this morning, St Paul makes this very clear to some people in Ephesus who so far have only known the baptism of John. 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit?', he asks them. 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit', they reply. So Paul baptises them in the name of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Our Christian life is not something we take for ourselves; it is given to us in the Spirit.

As the Spirit comes down upon Jesus, there is a voice heard from heaven. Now, this is the great climax of the story. Think of it: there is a great crowd gathered there, the heavens are torn apart, extraordinary things are going on. Now is the time to get the message across –now, in this moment of drama, when everybody's attention is riveted. Just imagine –what message would you want to get across at that point if you were God? Suppose you had one minute on prime-time TV to address a nation. What would you want to say most of all? Suppose you had hired a plane to pull a banner streaming across central London. What would you write on that banner? Now is the time; what is the message?

God's message is so simple, it is almost an anticlimax. He doesn't tell people how to live; he doesn't unveil a secret wisdom; he doesn't threaten; he doesn't promise; he doesn't explain the future. He just says to Jesus: 'You're my boy; and you're all right' –that's what he means when he says: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'. This is the one important thing he needs to get across: to tell Jesus how much he loves him. In other words, this baptism is about identity: who Jesus is, and who is the one he belongs to. And what God said to Jesus he said to each one of us in the baptism that made us Christians: 'You're my boy, my girl; and you're all right'. What Jesus is by nature, we become by adoption and grace: beloved sons and daughters of a God who loves us and make us his own.

That is the most important message God wants us to hear, and that is why we need to take our baptism seriously: because it assures us of our identity. We live in an age where many people are really unsure about who they are, confused about their identity, bewildered by the celebrity 'icons' paraded before them. People fight furiously about identity, how A's identity threatens B's, or C's is better than D's; and the more unsure of themselves they feel the shriller they shout.

But, for us who are baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, identity is given and secure. When my little Rosalinka was lifted out of the tub, the priest lifted her up high above his head and whooshed her along in front of the screen full of icons –real icons, of saints not celebrities. Her little face lit up with delight at their glittering golden surfaces, but the inner joy was to know that these shining ones were now her brothers and sisters: like you, like me, she has become a citizen of heaven.

The great Reformer Martin Luther was troubled by doubts, fears, anxieties throughout his life. Terrors would suddenly grab him in the middle of the night, or when he was sitting with friends. But he always had one way of overcoming his fears. Lying in bed, to his wife's annoyance he would shout out: 'Baptizatus sum, I have been baptised'. Visiting his friends, to their

annoyance he would write on walls or tables with a piece of chalk: *Baptizatus sum*. That identity gave him peace of mind.

Whether in the joy of celebration, or the anxiety of mental distress, or just the everyday business of living, this is what our baptism means for us. It marks us out as a new creation of God. It tells us that both the start of our Christian life and its continuance are a gift from God the Holy Spirit. Most of all, it assures us that we are who we are: beloved daughters and sons of God.

That identity is something which we are to carry with us throughout our lives, and which nobody can take from us. The theologian Elizabeth Stuart wrote these moving words after being at the funeral of a friend:

There is only one identity stable enough to hope in ... In the end before the throne of grace everything will dissolve except that identity ... Gender, race, sexual orientation, family, nationality and all other culturally constructed identities will not survive the grave ... [But] the I that I am is God's own special creation, and that is my only ground for hope.

So, as you stand at the beginning of this new year of 2021, give thanks to God for the baptism with which he has made you his own. Give thanks for the baptism in which he said to you: 'You're my boy, my girl; and you're all right'. Give thanks for the baptism which gives you an identity in which you can live your life with assurance of love and hope of glory.

+Michael Lichfield