

## Reflection on the baptism of Jesus

A moment of prayer....

Take my words and speak through them, take our ears and hear through them, take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you. **Amen.**

Many millions of years prior to John bursting into the spiritual wilderness of the Hebrew nation, was the first baptism, the baptism of creation. As we heard in the reading from Genesis, the earth was covered in darkness, it was empty, it was formless, until the Spirit of God swept across the water, creating order, form, and light.

At this beginning, we see God manifest in creation, the first Epiphany, the first baptism.

In 2021, we too perhaps might feel covered by a world-wide darkness. Overwhelmed by the impact of the pandemic, the conflicted politics in Washington, and our knowledge of global poverty. We're living in a world, it seems, that needs light to be rekindled.

Yet it is significant, that often, when things seem difficult and hope is thin on the ground, that we see the bright lights of love and selflessness emerge. We only need to recall the kindnesses of people in our communities during lockdown. Wherever there is darkness, there will always be a counter reaction of love and light, and this is the stronger.

As Desmond Tutu said in 2012....

**Goodness is stronger than evil; Love is stronger than hate; Light is stronger than darkness; ... victory is ours through Him who loves us.**

And the baptism of Jesus, is an illustration of that.

Baptism is from the Greek word, Baptizo, and it means to immerse.

The baptism of Jesus is, I'm sure, a very familiar passage to all of you, but I want to focus on what it actually means to be immersed.

Jesus was immersed.

He was immersed in the life of the people that he queued up with as he waited for John to baptise him, sharing their joys, sorrows, their hopes.

He was immersed in the waters of the Jordan, deeply cleansing and purifying. And he was also filled with the Holy Spirit; loving, affirming, empowering and encouraging... this my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

And after his baptism, he was engaged in deep thinking in the wilderness before immersing himself in the depths of humanity, entering into those parts of people that laughed or sang, that danced or cried, that were sick or suffering – at all times desiring the best for them.

At Jesus' baptism then, we see God manifest in Jesus, the second Epiphany.

So, thinking now of our baptism, for some us, many years ago. Of our immersion in the water and our receiving of the Holy Spirit, what impact has that had on us?

Baptism is a sacrament, one of the two recognised by the Church of England. Sacraments are about receiving God's grace, his unconditional love and forgiveness, whether or not we feel we deserve it. It is preceded by faith and followed by transformation. We believe, we confess our sins, we are forgiven, and so we think differently and behave differently.

In a sense, it allows us to become lights in the darkness of our world; to bring some order into the chaos of living, to bring some hope into the hearts of those who feel emptiness.

We are called to be immersed in the world, like Jesus, in the life of people – drawing alongside them, queuing up with them, entering those parts of people that laugh or sing, that dance or cry, that are sick or suffering.

We are to be as Christ to others, God manifest through us, a third epiphany.

And as we emerge from the waters of baptism, having immersed ourselves in the love of humanity, strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit, may we hope to hear our name....in whom God is well pleased.