

The Baptism of the Lord 2022

We have a swift transition from the baby in the manger to the adult Jesus in today's feast of the Baptism of the Lord which brings to an end the Christmas season and opens up for us what is known liturgically as Ordinary Time. One visual reminder of this will be the colour of the vestments which from tomorrow will return to green on Sundays and weekdays unless there is a feast day. Green in nature fills us with hope as green shoots tell us that plants are growing. So the colour green can give us hope throughout the year

The first person mentioned in today's gospel passage is John the Baptist who had a significant number of followers drawn to him by his teaching and his austere life style. Some of these followers were beginning to think that he might be the Christ. John denies this thought, leaving the people in no doubt that he is NOT the Christ. He baptises with water but 'someone is coming who is more powerful than I am who will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.' The passage continues, 'Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer.' Jesus at prayer is one of Luke's major themes throughout the Gospel, often at important moments and also with a global dimension of transformation for the better. On this occasion three things happen while Jesus is at prayer; the heavens open, The Holy Spirit descends on him in a bodily shape like a dove, and a voice came from heaven – You are my Son the Beloved; my favour rests on you.

This feast invites us to reflect on our own baptism, reminding ourselves that the Spirit descending on Jesus is the same Spirit we received at Baptism, a Spirit who guides us throughout our lives, the Spirit who will help us live out our baptismal promises with passion, listening to the Spirit, conversing with the Spirit and being led by the Spirit. This Spirit unites us to Jesus and to one another, reminding us that we are not alone, rather we are on a pilgrimage together. We have entered a new life in the Spirit, and anointed by the Spirit, we, like the adult Jesus, are sent into the world. This can be daunting so it is worth remembering that throughout his gospel Luke shows Jesus praying at key moments of his ministry, even while he was hanging on the cross – Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing. The Spirit moves us to pray, not only for our personal needs, but for the Church and still more, for the world, especially for peace and justice among all peoples.

In celebrating the waters of baptism we are also reminded of the importance of water, which many of us take for granted, but which in other parts of the world is treated as a gift because of its scarcity, or because it has been contaminated. We also know of the power of water, think of the number of refugees who have drowned, seeking a better life. We think of water for refreshment, cleansing and nourishment. It is essential for life. Also essential for our life as baptised Christians is prayer, that unites heaven and earth, giving us hope that we, as the Spirit filled people of God, can continue to proclaim the Good News of being God's beloved sons and daughters.

Bidding Prayers for the Baptism of the Lord

Celebrant:

Baptised in water and sealed with the Holy Spirit, as heralds of God's Kingdom, we give voice to the longings of our world.

Reader:

For all the baptised – that they, and we, may be faithful witnesses to the demands and privileges of God's Kingdom.

Lord in your mercy

For Governments and Political Leaders throughout the world – that they will put the needs of their people before any personal gain, leading with integrity and justice.

Lord in your mercy

For ourselves – that we will graciously place our gifts and talents at the service of others and for the Common Good.

Lord in your mercy

For those suffering pain in body, mind or spirit – that they will receive relief from knowing the presence of God and the love and support of family and friends.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid 19 pandemic, and Sister Hilary, Edward Michael Maloney, Joseph Collins, Chester Periera, Louise Keogh, Arthur Clifford and William Joseph Shea whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God, through baptism we become your beloved sons and daughters conscious of the needs of our many needs. Heal the world with your love, and bathe us in your truth. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen