

The United Benefice of St Michael
Lichfield and St John, Wall

Baptism of Christ 10th January

Canticle - A Song of God's Chosen One

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

**There shall come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.**

**And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,**

**The spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.**

**He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear,**

**But with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.**

**The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.
The calf, the lion and the fatling together,
with a little child to lead them.**

**They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.**

Isaiah 11.1-4a,6,9

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

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.

Amen.

New Testament Reading

Acts 19.1-7

¹While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ²He 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.' ³Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' ⁴Paul 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.' ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied – ⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.

Psalm 29

¹ Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendour.

³ The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

⁴ The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'

¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for ever.

¹¹ May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading.

Mark 1.4-11

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And 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. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He 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. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

¹⁰And 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. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Sermon

Beloved children

Bishop Michael's sermon for 10 January 2020

Epiphany 1 [Baptism of the Lord]: 10th January 2021

Mk 1.4-11 (Gen 1.1-5, Ac 19.1-7)

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 Lich

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Sonia Doidge, Colin Eastwood, David Edge, Robert Harris, James Knight, Robert McAllester-Jones, Matthew and Emmeline and their parents, Ruth and Andrew Martel, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Julian & Wendy,

Those who have died

Bill Hill

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST JOHN

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Those who have died

Sean Drew

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity,
you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:
by the power of your Spirit
complete the heavenly work of our rebirth
through the waters of the new creation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

CHURCH NOTICES

Closing our churches for the time being.

After consultation with the churchwardens of both our churches and the St Michael's Standing committee we have decided to close both St Michael's and St John's for public worship for at least January. The most recent lockdown and rising numbers of Covid infections are obvious reasons for doing this. We want to ensure that everyone is safe in church and feels safe and it is understandable that, as we wait for the vaccine to be distributed, many members of our congregations will want to be very cautious. Closing our churches is something we do with a heavy heart but this seems to be the most sensible thing to do at the moment.

Each Sunday two services will be available live on zoom for people to join. At 8.00am there will be a Book of Common Prayer Communion service. At 10.00am there will be a Sunday Service which will include readings, hymns to join in, and a sermon. We hope that many people will attend. These kinds of services do at least give us the chance to "see" each other, support each other and maintain our fellowship together.

The link to these services will be sent out with the notices each week. Our usual service sheets will be on the website and will contain the Sunday readings.

Our Sunday evening zoom worship **will not** continue while there are morning services on zoom. At present we do not intend to record further sermons as there will be a sermon at the Sunday Service.

All of these arrangements will be reviewed towards the end of January.

Simon Baker

Rector of St Michael Lichfield and St John Wall

**MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS
FOR 2021**

£8.50

payable by cheque to

"P.C.C. of St, Michael and St. Mary".

NO PERSONAL CHEQUES PLEASE.

Barbara Homewood Tel 255909

FEBRUARY MAGAZINE

We shall try to deliver the Magazine in the normal way as much as possible .
Barbara Homewood

MU Members.

Our MU subs are due, this year they are £ 26. Could you pay by cheque please, made payable to St. Michael's MU. Thank you *Lynn*

CHURCHES TOGETHER www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html

COUNSELLING One result of this 3rd lockdown starting will be increased pressures on all of us, and many people are feeling anxious and depressed and are coping with a lot of extra stress and loss. Phoenix Counselling Service is a small charity which for 5 years, has been providing counselling to adults living in Burntwood, Lichfield and the surrounding areas, who are not able to access counselling via the NHS and who cannot afford private counselling. Professionally-trained counsellors provide a safe, confidential space to talk about your thoughts and feelings, and work through problems that you might be facing in your life. At present all the counselling is online or by telephone although we will offer face to face sessions when restrictions permit.

Contact details: www.phoenixcounselling-service.co.uk

email: phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com

Mobile: 07415517663

Thank you for any help you can give us in bringing the service to the attention of people locally.
Best wishes, Rhoda

THE FOODBANK is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them. *Maggie and David_01543 255308*

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 10th January

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom

Monday 11th January

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
12:30pm	Funeral: Bill Hill	Fradley

Tuesday 12th January

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Wednesday 13th January

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Thursday 14th January

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Friday 8th January

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Saturday 9th January

Sunday 10th January

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom