

# Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

## The Baptism of Christ - 10th January 2021

### Collect:

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognize him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**Amen.**

### 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 forever.
- 11 May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

### A reading from the book of 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.

**This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

### Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to 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."

**This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

## Reflection:

I wonder what you might say if someone asked you what you would find or use at a baptism. What symbols are we used to seeing and talking about when a person is baptised? You'd probably mention water. Perhaps you'd remember the candle, the prayers, welcoming the newly baptised person by clapping, or maybe you'd think of the oil, making the sign of the cross on the candidate's forehead. I wonder if you would say 'the Spirit'.

When Jesus arrives at the River Jordan and asks John to baptise him, this is a turning point in the practice of baptism. Up until this point, John has been baptising people as a sign of their repentance, showing that they are sorry for doing wrong and that they will try to do better. This is still a part of our baptism services today. But with Jesus, there's something odd happening. For one thing, Jesus isn't living a sinful life that he needs to turn away from. Jesus isn't coming to John because he needs to get his act together. In fact, John considers himself unworthy to even tie Jesus' shoelaces. So why does Jesus get baptised? What is it for? And why does Jesus' baptism change what baptism is about for us?

Well, the key is the Spirit.

One reason for Jesus to be baptised, even though he doesn't need baptism in the same way as everyone else, is that it marks his commitment at the start of his ministry. It is still a sign, but instead of repentance, it is of belonging, a sign of Jesus giving his whole self to God, and to his ministry teaching people about God's kingdom. Another symbol is that it shows Jesus' humanity. True, Jesus wasn't in need of repentance like everyone else, but Jesus was fully sharing with us what it means to be human. But most amazingly, bundled into all of this was the fact that by being baptised, Jesus changed what baptism was, and opened the way to a new kind of relationship between us and God. Instead of only repentance, it is a moment of human and divine mingling, dwelling together.

Jesus goes down into the water, and when he comes up there is this vision of the Spirit like a dove, coming from heaven and alighting on, or, within, Jesus. In this moment, Jesus is filled, infused, with the Spirit from God, and suddenly, a new reality has come into the world. Even though Jesus was already fully God as well as fully man, this moment shows us the love of God in the gift of the Spirit. This moment models for us what it is to be baptised, to be loved by God, to be a child of the divine, filled with the Spirit. Everything that Jesus experiences in this moment is what we also take part in when we are baptised. As a result, our relationship with God is transformed.

Take a moment and imagine the scene: Jesus going down into the river, coming up and seeing the Spirit and hearing the voice of God saying 'you are my son, with you I am well pleased'. And now imagine it again, but it is yourself in the place of Jesus. It is you who the Spirit alights within, and it is you that God speaks to and says 'my beloved, with you I am well pleased'. This is what it is to be baptised, as the apostle Paul says, in the name of Jesus.

It is a start in a new stage of life. When Jesus was baptised, it wasn't just a thing that happened and then was over. Instead it was like a door opening. It was the *start* of a ministry, the start of a journey, something that had an effect on Jesus from that point on. So, when we are baptised, it isn't done and then over. Instead, we are baptised into a new way of being. It isn't just a public act of getting wet, nor is it simply a way of joining the church. Instead it is something more profound. When we are baptised as Christians, what we are doing is sharing in the baptism that Jesus had. We, too, receive the Spirit. We, too, know that we are God's beloved child.

John the Baptist called people to repent, and told them that the Lord was coming. But in his act of baptising Jesus, John showed that the Lord had arrived, and that God now dwells within us through the Spirit. In this way we have the promise and the knowledge of God with us, sustaining and strengthening us as we go through life, just like Jesus did. And whether your own baptism was recent, or maybe a long time ago, or even still to come, know that the gift of the Spirit that we share with Christ is one that remains with you always. So remember Christ's baptism with joy, child of God, and know that you are beloved.

Amen.

- Rev Cat

*Our Saviour Christ is the Prince of Peace..*

**The peace of the Lord be always with you.**

**This week's hymn:**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh:  
awake and listen for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings.

Let every heart be cleansed from sin,  
make straight the way for God within,  
and so prepare to be the home  
where such a mighty guest may come.

For you are our salvation, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward  
without your grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick, stretch out your hand,  
and make the fallen sinner stand;  
shine out, and let your light restore  
earth's own true loveliness once more.

To you, O Christ, all praises be,  
whose advent sets your people free;  
whom with the Father we adore  
and Holy Spirit evermore!

**A prayer for Epiphany**

Come freshly to us now, Lord God,  
And as we offer you our lives, renew in us your  
gifts:

The gold of our potential.  
The incense of our prayers and aspirations,  
The myrrh of healing for our pain;  
Feed us and nourish us  
that we may grow in the life of Christ;  
Fill us with your Spirit  
that we may overflow with your love,  
and transform the world with your glory.  
Amen.

**Please pray for:**

**Those with chronic or long-term illness:** Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean Dominy

**Those undergoing treatment or currently ill:** Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs, Stacey Pratt

**All who are affected by the Coronavirus** in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

**For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refugees** across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

**Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss:** Pearl Leggett, John Chapman, Barry Stammers

**Prayer for growth!** Please join in this prayer at home:

*"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."*

Call this number —> for free.



## Notices:

**Our Baptism & Confirmation** service has been postponed. To be rearranged when possible.

**St Thomas Pilgrim Community (STPC):** You are invited to join us for our Second Rhythm of Life Commitment Service on Sunday 10th January at 4pm with Bishop Mike on ZOOM. *'We, the St Thomas Pilgrim Community aspire to be a hospitable community of people, journeying together prayerfully, with a rhythm of life, in the adventure of seeking God and being engaged in loving service in North West Ipswich and wherever we are.'* Since the lockdown in March, we have been meeting almost weekly for prayer, bible study and mutual support, hosting the meditation group and inviting others to join us. We pray for the parish and its members and will continue to do so in the year ahead. Malcolm, Jim, Natacha, Jackie & Pat are part of the STPC. Please email Malcolm on malcolm.gibbs2@ntlworld.com for the ZOOM link to join us.

**From Canon Jutta:** Dear St Thomas family, A huge thank you for the wonderful send off on Sunday, for your generous and beautiful gifts, for your kind messages: in the photo you can see the stunning flowers, the exquisite chalice and paten with lavabo bowl, which I will use for the Eucharist with the WITH Community. I am very touched by the generous cheque of £525 as well as some money 'to treat myself'. It was a huge privilege to be your parish priest for five years, and I will always think of you with much gratitude.

With love and prayers, Canon Jutta



### This Week:

#### **Sunday 10th January**

**10am Eucharist:** in-person worship with Zoom and livestream

**4pm STPC Commitment Service:** with Bishop Mike on Zoom.

#### **Monday 11th January**

**4.30 STPC evening prayer** – all welcome, speak to Malcolm for Zoom link

#### **Tuesday 12th January**

**5.30 Meditation group** —livestreamed on the STPC facebook page

#### **Wednesday 13th January**

**10am Eucharist** with livestream

#### **Thursday 14th January**

**7pm Zoom Alpha**

### **Church website:**

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

**Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

### **Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation**

*Pearl Bird; Margaret & Les Bloomfield; Naomi Bloomfield with Amelia, Lily, Archie & Dylan; Peggy Blyth; Carol Brown; Lyanne Brendt with Robert & Aaron; Keith Brisland & family*



**11th:** Daphne Startup; **12th:** Jackie Rathbone; **16th:** Simon Pearson

### **Contacts:**

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*Cat's day off: Mondays*

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs

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### ***If you would like to chat, you could also ring:***

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Rev Jackie 07962 172639

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