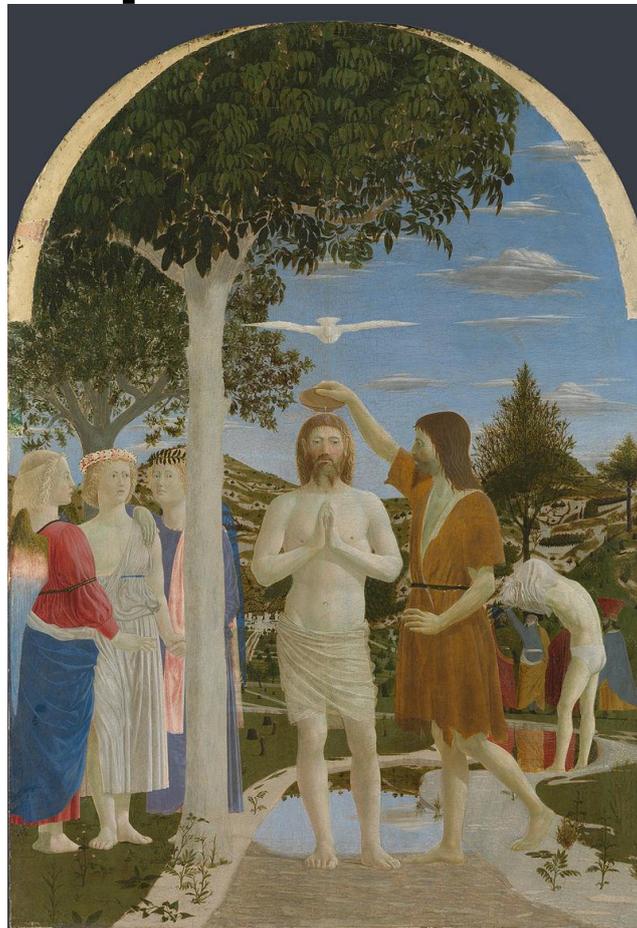




Welcome to
All Saints
Kings Heath
Your Parish Church
in the Diocese of Birmingham

The Baptism of Christ



(Piero della Francesca, National Gallery)

Holy Communion
Sunday 9th January 2022

We gather

At home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. You might light a candle.

We imagine everyone in their homes around the parish, united in preparing for prayer.

Music as we gather:

1. O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love,
let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.
O let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove
will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs. (x2)

2. O come and sing this song with gladness as your hearts are filled with joy,
lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name.
O give him all your tears and sadness, give him all your years of pain,
and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

(words & music: John Wimber)

Priest: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with *us* all. **Amen.**

WELCOME and NOTICES

HYMN [Crown him with many crowns](#)

1. Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne;
hark, how the heav'nly anthem drowns
all music but its own:
awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.

2. Crown him the Virgin's Son,
the God incarnate born,
whose arm those crimson trophies won
which now his brow adorn;
fruit of the mystic Rose,
as of that Rose the Stem,
the Root, whence mercy ever flows,
the Babe of Bethlehem.

3. Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified:
no angel in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends each burning eye
at mysteries so bright.

4. Crown him the Lord of peace,
whose pow'r a sceptre sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease,
absorbed in prayer and praise:
his reign shall know no end,
and round his piercèd feet
fair flow'rs of paradise extend
their fragrance ever sweet.

5. Crown him the Lord of years,
the Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

(words: Matthew Bridges; music: George Job Elvey; descant: James Lancelot)

We pray:

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

We seek forgiveness

CONFESSION

Deacon: Hear the word of God to his people: "I have called you by name, you are mine. Do not fear, for I am with you." We confess the ways we resist God's love and distance ourselves from each other. (Isaiah 43)

Silence

God our Father, long-suffering, full of grace and truth, you create us from nothing and give us life. You give your faithful people new life in the water of baptism. You do not turn your face from us, nor cast us aside. We confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbour. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. Restore us for the sake of your Son, and bring us to heavenly joy, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ABSOLUTION At home we pray for forgiveness. In church, the priest declares forgiveness for all, wherever we worship:

*May the father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.***

THE GLORIA

1. Glory be to God in heaven,
peace to those who love him well;
on the earth let all his people
speak his grace, his wonders tell:
Lord, we praise you for your glory,
mighty Father, heavenly King;
hear our joyful adoration
and accept the thanks we bring.

2. Only Son of God the Father,
Lamb who takes our sin away,
now with him in triumph seated,
for your mercy, Lord we pray:
Jesus Christ, most high and holy;
Saviour, you are God alone
in the glory of the Father
with the Spirit: Three in One!

We pray THE COLLECT remembering the Baptism of Christ

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; though 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.**

READING Isaiah 43:1-7 <https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=508643823>

READING Acts 8: 14-17 <https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=508643876>

HYMN

1. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

2. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.
Melt us, mould us, fill us, use us.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.

(words & music: Daniel Iverson)

GOSPEL READING Luke 3:15-17; 21-22
<https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=508643920>

In church we stand and, when it is announced, we say:

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON *from David*

We peer out into the darkness, nearly forgetting our lines, desperate to pick out our Grandad's face in the audience at our first Nativity Play. "Look how high I can swing, Mummy," we cry joyfully in the playground. We are endearing in our childish vulnerability. It's an attractive need for affirmation.

We are less so when we fish for compliments. It's toe curlingly embarrassing when we're too desperate for approval. More seriously, the scrabbling for moral high ground is a grab for approval that ironically leaves us isolated. Very few people look attractive on moral high ground. We seek approval by association, sometimes, too quick to let people know we're friends with so and so. Then there's the other embarrassing tactic: false modesty.

Slightly more bitter and ugly is our seeking affirmation in exclusivity, finding value not in the quality or pleasure of something, but in the fact that others don't have it.

All this tends only to hurt embarrass or isolate us, but our desire for approval can hurt others when it takes the form of our feeling threatened when others are affirmed. The next logical step is to think that we will only feel on top of things if we can put others down. Lots of our subtle office or staff room behaviour, and our familial passive aggression, are an outworking of this.

At the really dangerous end of the spectrum there was that President feeling jilted by the electorate, inciting violence so the Capitol got trashed a year ago. Dictators' lavish birthdays and murderous pressure on people to demonstrate loyalty,

John, one of Jesus' disciples, is an interesting case. He seeks the affirmation of association with Jesus when he and his brother James ask Jesus if they can sit on either side of him when he takes the throne in his kingdom. They bear the nickname "Boanerges" meaning "Sons of Thunder," representing their bad temper. Once, when a Samaritan town rejected Jesus, Luke tells us John and James made a bid for affirmation by association, confecting righteous anger, saying "shall we call down fire from heaven upon the town for rejecting you?" There it is: self-aggrandisement by doing others down and enjoying their mistakes. Jesus' first challenge to them was to cast a Samaritan as the compassionate neighbour in what would become his most famous parable. Needy, flawed and hot-tempered, John

manifests many of our worst attention-seeking traits, but Jesus held on to him and believed in him. After the resurrection, things changed for all the disciples. The incident in Acts today is a powerful illustration of just how. For John and Peter, having heard that people in Samaria had received the Gospel, hurried there to see if there was more they could give them. John went eagerly towards the Samaritans he had previously wanted to burn. Crossing religious, political and geographical borders, they presumed God's blessing belonged to people very different from themselves. The Holy Spirit poured out her power and affirmation in that gracious moment when the apostles' hands touched the heads of people clearly humble enough to kneel before them and accept the touch of people they in turn had hitherto despised. Let us not think that a distant event. That we receive news of Christ is a direct result of the early church's boundaries being dissolved like this, realising the whole history of God's affirmation of Israel was destined to be shared by all humanity.

Today's glorious passage from Isaiah holds Israel in the centre of God's gaze and seems at first to belittle the countries around. Speaking to people scattered, enslaved, bedraggled, calling them "precious, honoured and loved" was to insist that their identity is rooted in God's desire to be with them, not in the way anyone else was treating them. God says "I ignore the glamorous countries in order to focus on you." That is humorous lover's hyperbole. For God being God does not need to ignore anyone, knowing all things and all times and all places. It is a witty casting of God as a lover blind to others' beauty, enraptured with Israel's, just when exiled Israel felt herself an ugly, worthless failure. In reality, and the prophets assert this elsewhere, blessing God's people did not mean doing anyone else down. Quite the opposite.

Jesus' rising from the dead dissolved the competitiveness that had dogged the disciples, and fuelled the Roman empire. The Sons' of Thunder's desire for affirmation will have been no less strong, but they discovered it could be satisfied in new ways. It seems by going towards the once hated community, seeing what blessing they could give, they found a new affirmation. The church seems quickly to have geared itself up for this kind of impulsive ministry. We know they were funded by local donors, especially women like Lydia and Dorcas and Joanna. This helps explain why the likes of Peter, Paul, John, Philip, could drop everything and go where the Spirit seemed to call. The whole church quickly knew that others being blessed was a blessing to them.

They pieced together what they wanted to pass on of Jesus' life and ministry and the Gospels are the best of their efforts. Luke shows us the tantalisingly short ministry of Jesus who in just three years changed the way the world looked for ever. The silence of his first thirty years speaks volumes as we watch him queuing for baptism by John. "After all were baptised, and also Jesus was baptised" said St Luke, delightfully conveying Jesus' ordinariness. He had spent three decades

learning a craft in an artisan family in a little northern town. In prayer he received an exquisite affirmation from his heavenly Father. "You are my son, the beloved. In you I am well pleased."

Many counsellors' hours have been spent listening to people gradually realise how much of their angst is rooted in futile attempts to secure parental approval that has been withheld. That Jesus join the baptism queue and hear that blessing at the outset of his ministry is a profound affirmation of our ordinary humanity and our ordinary desire for affirmation. That we allow such desire to distort our relationships does not make the desire wrong. Isaiah conveys how much God desires to be with us. Our desiring affection and recognition is the most natural manifestation of our being made in God's image.

The baptism of Christ, his resurrection, then his injunction to baptise "all nations" is an invitation to everyone to find in his three year ministry all we need to live well with our God given desire for affirmation. Our affirmation and encouragement of each other as parents, children, siblings, friends, colleagues, fellow worshippers, neighbours, strangers, is the surest way of bringing out the best in each other and introducing one another to God.

The affirmation of people very close and special to us really does matter, but it is not in isolation. The apostles show us that any strength we draw from safe and good affirmation is to be used to energise us to seek and affirm all that is good in the lives of complete strangers, foreigners, and the people we might convince ourselves it's ok to despise. Affirming what is good in an awkward person can be difficult, but it might be the making of them. Blocking and belittling the famished ego will not solve anything. Affirming what is good in a person, or indeed in a dysfunctional nation, is the only chance we have of untwisting the distorted but God given desire that is making them ugly.

We need not be ashamed of our desire for love, recognition, encouragement. God came in Christ to stand in the queue with us so we could accept that human connectivity as a gift and understand it better. So accepting, like John and Peter, supported by the church, emboldened by Christ's resurrection, we might go out with their energetic humility, their dynamic gratitude that looks for things to bless in strangers and awkward people showing that, they too are precious, treasured and loved.

We are unlikely to be able to help if we have not accepted God's affirmation of us. I invite you this week to dwell with the verses from Isaiah, revisited and interpreted in the light of their fulfilment in Christ, who in Baptism shows how treasured our ordinariness is; how well our flaws are known. Consider Isaiah's words, not so much cerebrally, as wonderingly. More than unpacking an idea, be with the words as if you are watching a candle flame. If you're anything like me, at first you may

well get busy listing reasons why God should not consider you precious or honourable. You might find your darting mind trying to take refuge in theoretical questions about free will or election. Perhaps you will try to point God to all the much better people around you whose goodness you envy, only to find God saying irrationally, no, supra-rationally, "I'd give them all up for you." Give it time to get through these layers until you begin to accept God's assertion about you. Conclude by saying aloud the words God said to Jesus and accept that, by his Baptism, he shows God says them to you: "You are my daughter, the beloved. In you I am well pleased."

We affirm our faith

At home, if able, we stand and turn in the direction of Church, where we also stand to affirm our faith:

Deacon: As we do at Baptism we affirm our faith in God made known to the Church as Father Son and Holy Spirit:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All: I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit?
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

I believe and trust in her.

This is the Faith of the Church

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

INTERCESSIONS In Church, prayers are led by Clare Noakes. Here, for those praying at home, are intercessions for today from Common Worship.

Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Washed clean by the waters of baptism,

let us pray that we may live the life to which he has called us.

Lord Jesus, eternal Word,

proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner,

hear us as we pray for all who proclaim your word ...

Lord of truth,

hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, baptizing with the Spirit and with fire,

strengthen us to withstand all the trials of our faith ...

Lord of truth,

hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringing forgiveness to all who repent,

teach your Church dependence on your grace ...

Lord of truth,

hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, fulfilment of the promises of old,

give hope to all who suffer or are ignored ...

Lord of truth,

hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father,

anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit ...

Lord of truth,

hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringer of hope,

share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life ...

Lord of truth,

hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,

in you the Father makes us and all things new.

Transform the poverty of our nature

by the riches of your grace,

and in the renewal of our lives

make known your heavenly glory.

Amen.

THE PEACE

We pause to remember each other: those worshipping at home, and those worshipping in Church, and those we care for whom we cannot visit.

Deacon: With the apostles' touch, the Holy Spirit fell upon the Samaritans. We must refrain from touching at the moment, but in that same Spirit we affirm all that is good in one another, saying the touching words:
The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

(Acts 8:15-17)

HYMN [Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round](#)

1. Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round
of circling planets singing on their way;
guide of the nations from the night profound
into the glory of the perfect day;
rule in our hearts, that we may ever be
guided and strengthened and upheld by thee.
2. We are of thee, the children of thy love,
by virtue of thy well-belovèd Son;
descend, O Holy Spirit, like a dove,
into our hearts, that we may be as one:
as one with thee, to whom we ever tend;
as one with him, our Brother and our Friend.
3. We would be one in hatred of all wrong,
one in our love of all things sweet and fair,
one with the joy that breaketh into song,
one with the grief that trembles into prayer,
one in the pow'r that makes thy children free
to follow truth, and thus to follow thee.
4. O clothe us with thy heav'nly armour, Lord,
thy trusty shield, thy sword of love divine;
our inspiration be thy constant word;
we ask no victories that are not thine:
give or withhold, let pain or pleasure be;
enough to know that we are serving thee.

(words: John White Chadwick alt; music: Orlando Gibbons)

The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer (below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared, first praying:

God, we long for Communion. With this symbolic meal stir my hope for the fellowship meal we cannot yet see, and help me wait for it with patience. **Amen.**

(cf Romans 8:2)

As the president takes the bread and wine:

As the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside are now reunited on this table in bread and wine, so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together from the corners of the earth into your kingdom. **Amen.**

We celebrate God's affirmation of our humanity

In Church we stand, if able, for the Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

God of hope, in your Holy Spirit you hovered over the face of the waters in creation, and in your pillar of fire you led your people to liberation across the Red Sea. Through the waters you brought your people into the life and land of promise. In your Son's baptism at the Jordan we see your creative and liberating purpose at work amid our human flaws and failures, and we hear anew with hope the promise of your voice. In our own baptism you number us among your saints, created and redeemed for your glory. Through baptism you bury us in death with Christ yet raise us to new life with him for ever. And so we gladly thank you, with saints and angels and archangels and all the company of heaven singing the hymn of your unending praise:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessing God, who sent down your Holy Spirit like a dove upon your Beloved, send your Spirit among us now to sanctify us by your grace. By the power of that same Spirit, make these gifts of bread and wine be for us the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

After supper he took the cup. Again, he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Father of glory, you have opened your heaven and come among us. Be close to those who ache for your liberating power in the midst of travails and seek your open heaven. Visit all who need the healing, forgiving, peace-making and restoring touch of your Spirit and look for your kingdom to come. Bless all who long to be called beloved, by sibling or parent or spouse or friend or child, and any who are searching for the love that only you can bring, until all stand in your presence and sing your name and are enfolded in your embrace, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, ever one God. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon: As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Priest: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All: Though we are many, we are one body.

For we all share in one bread.

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you. Eat in remembrance that he died for you and feed on him in your hearts with thanksgiving.

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Redeemer of the world, give us your peace. (x2)

We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread and wine, now for us the body and blood of Christ.

Before administering the sacrament the priest says:

The body of Christ, given for you.

All: Amen.

SONGS *during Communion* [Mallaig sprinkling song](#)

1. Spirit of God, come dwell within me.
Open my heart, O come set me free,
fill me with love for Jesus, my Lord,
O fill me with living water.

*Jesus is living, Jesus is here.
Jesus, my Lord, come closer to me.
Jesus, our Saviour dying for me,
and rising to save his people.*

2. Lord, how I thirst, O Lord, I am weak.
Lord, come to me, you alone do I seek.
Lord, you are life, and love and hope,
O fill me with living water.

3. Lord, I am blind, O Lord, I can't see.
Stretch out your hand, O Lord, comfort me.
Lead me your way in light and in truth,
O fill me with living water.

(words: Helen Kennedy; music: Scottish folk melody, arr editors of 'Common Ground')

Only by grace can we enter,
only by grace can we stand;
not by our human endeavour,
but by the blood of the Lamb.

Into your presence you call us,
you call us to come.
Into your presence you draw us,

and now by your grace we come,
now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
who would stand?
Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb.

(words & music: Gerrit Gustafson)

A POST COMMUNION PRAYER *may be said.*

Inside or outside we are called to serve

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with your Word *[and with the body of Christ]*. Strengthen us in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

We imagine our scattered fellowship, family and colleagues and all our neighbours praying for blessing on all:

THE BLESSING

[May] God, who in Christ gives us a spring of water welling up to eternal life, perfect in [us] the image of his glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among [us] and remain with [us] always.

Amen.

HYMN [Praise, my soul, the King of heaven](#)

1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven!
To his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

2. Praise him for his grace and favour
to our fathers in distress;
praise him still the same as ever,
slow to chide and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness!

3. Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows!

4. Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

(words: Henry Frances Lyte, based on Psalm 103; music: John Goss)

Deacon: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ, Amen.

VOLUNTARY



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