

Reflection: New life! [Acts 19:1-7](#) [Mark 1:4-11](#)

Water: a powerful symbol of life, that which sustains us all, from the most powerful humans on the planet to the very earth on which we stand. But it is also a symbol of death: sinking beneath the waves, being swallowed up in its depths. We wash ourselves in it, never perhaps more so than at the moment when we are so acutely conscious of the risk of viral infection, cleaning even where we cannot see any dirt.

Water is the symbol we use at baptism. In and of itself, it is just H₂O, but it reminds us of a greater promise. John the Baptist told the crowds who came to him at the banks of the River Jordan that 'I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

The baptism of John was a way of getting people ready: think of it as we might wash our hands in preparation for a meal. He reminded people that they needed to look carefully at their lives and get rid of all that was holding them back from following God: to turn to a right relationship with him and other people.

But something special happened at the Jordan when Jesus arrived. Fully embracing his humanity, Jesus came to be baptised by John, and at that point, heaven and earth were brought together, and a voice from heaven called out in joy: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' Here God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, seen in the form of a dove descending upon Jesus come together.



As we remember the baptism of Christ, we also remember and give thanks for our baptism into God's family. Being part of that family isn't something which we have earned; it is not a badge for good behaviour or a mark of us being somehow 'better' than someone else. This is grace: that God loves his creation so much that he allows his only Son to come and share our humanity, to die for our sins and to be raised from death to life for our sake. He sees our infinite worth and, in baptism, brings us to the start of a new life. He gives us the gift of his Holy Spirit, to comfort and guide us as we go on.

In this time when you may be feeling overwhelmed with the cares of the world, be assured of God's presence with you. The new life of baptism, the promise of God's Holy Spirit is here for you. It is a baptism we share with all Christians through the ages, and it builds us together as a church now. Even when our worship together is paused, we are not alone.

Revd Vicky Barrett

