

Our Service Together

January 9th 2021



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia. This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased. Alleluia, alleluia!

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

*The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.*

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to
you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us
our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his
kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 29 *We say the psalm aloud*

Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

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

The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare;
in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'

The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Isaiah 43.1-7

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you;

I will say to the north, 'Give them up', and to the south, 'Do not withhold;

bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased' and "Father, if you are willing, let this cup pass from me; however not my will, but yours be done" are intrinsically linked. Both phrases appear as Jesus is at prayer, one at the beginning of his ministry and the other towards its earthly completion.

Today's feast is carefully worded 'the baptism of Christ'; distinct from the 'presentation of Jesus' in the temple. The second is the ritual of thanksgiving by Mary and Joseph for Jesus' birth; it is about the gift of human life. In his baptism Jesus finds His calling, to be the Christ, to fulfil the messianic calling of God. With the declaration 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased' comes, you might say, a confirmation. A confirmation of identity and of relationship. This is the Son of the Father of Heaven and the relationship between them is based on love; but what form of love? Well, "Father, if you are willing, let this cup pass from me; however not my will, but yours be done" reveals it is a love of service to the calling of the Son, a service to the fulfilling of the will of the Father, and as the events of Easter will show this is to be Messiah, to be Christ, to pass through death to resurrection life and bring redemption to creation.

In his baptism Jesus receives affirmation of his identity and revelation of his calling to be Messiah, to be Christ. And more he receives the Spirit as sign, seal and empowerment to live out this 'calling', this 'son-ship, to be the Messiah.

A friend shared a 2022 New Year's motivational speech by an Australian chap with me last week. A core part of what was said focused on how generational learnt behaviour is often not questioned, just received. The wondering was whether much of the ills of society today are because modes of behaviour have simply been received and never questioned. The speaker also made a statement that I had to dwell on further, he said 'there are two important events in life, being born and then realising why'.

I found myself thinking afterwards of the conversation Jesus has with Nicodemus who finds it hard to understand how someone can receive salvation and be 'born anew in the Spirit'. This discourse is a foundation for how Christians believe that baptism brings us to a new life in relationship with God as Father, signed and sealed and empowered by the Spirit. It is the 'being born' moment. Arguably, Gethsemane is Jesus 'realising why' moment; the full dimension of what is before him is realised and in his full humanity he questions it with some real fear. But what of us?

The speaker continued by suggesting most folks spend their lives making plans for when they die. This can be through amassing things, wealth, experiences which would be displayed at their end to say to the world 'look at

what I've done and gained'. It could be by working hard to atone for actions, to fend off a feared judgment, be that through Karma or at the hand of God.

In our baptism something happens, we die in Christ and are guaranteed resurrection life through the Spirit come to us – we have no death preparation to make, and as such we are free to live life in all its fullness. The gift is given and the declaration made over us, “this is my son/daughter, in whom I am well pleased”, our calling is to live out that relationship, that reality; but how?

Well, we do not have to live to amass things and wealth that does not impress God for in the end “the first will be last and the last first” – God does not do celebrity and success. We also can't earn eternity or do something to fend off the wrath of God; Jesus has already completed all and the gift is given to us. Our calling is to live out our relationship with the Father, just like Jesus. To be faithful to that life we given as sons and daughters; to, as the Benedictus says “serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him: all the days of our life”. The question comes, not just at the start of the new year but at the start of each day, 'how are we serving, how are we being holy, how are we seeking righteousness' knowing that we do all things before God in the presence of His Spirit?

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

We pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the Church.

You have called us into the family of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ be strengthened by your grace.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a temple where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts so that our lives will reflect your holiness.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world, so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine as a witness to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body, so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power to bring hope to those in distress.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be the Bride, where you, Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast, where we will be united with you for ever.
Jesus, Lord of the Church, in your mercy hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the Church, you have called us into fellowship with all your saints.
We unite our prayers with theirs and ask for grace to serve you with joy where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for all eternity. Amen.

The Collect

All: 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.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.