

Our Service Together

January 14th 2024

Baptism of Christ (deferred)

An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia, Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world. 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 Psalm - 29

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 Genesis 1.1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

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.

The Gospel 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.'

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

After assembly at school this week I wandered along the corridor between classrooms to do my bit as 'Literacy Governor' and read some of the creative writing the children have produced this year. Outside of one class were pieces of work recounting the life and work of Dr Barnardo, whom they had been studying. I was surprised to read young Barnardo was a very nasty child who stole a lot and engaged in general thuggery. But,

at some point whilst growing in his youth something happened in his life – and epiphany moment after which a change began to occur. This moment was not an instant turn around but the beginning of many, many years of change and transformation. The result, many years later saw him working to establish his children's homes.

In Genesis we read of the beginning of creation, from nothing there is abundance; a split second from darkness to light and then... well? It isn't that everything came to be in that instant, but it began to come into being. The Spirit of God broods over the darkness and then begins creating; and this creation coming into being God declares good.

It is interesting that the most up to date scholarship notes that the Hebrew words used in the opening lines of Genesis say 'God began to create' rather than, in a flash God created everything.

Mark takes a similar stance in the opening line of his Gospel – 'the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ', he says. This is the start of what is now working its purposes out; it is not so much an 'on/off' light switch as a 'dimmer' switch bringing the light up and up and up, dispelling the darkness.

This beginning, this new beginning for creation, starts with water, with spirit and a declaration by God. Jesus who has no need to be baptised for repentance enters the waters in solidarity with all humanity and, as he arises he is greeted by the heavens opened to him, and by dint of his being 'one with us' opened to then to our humanity. The Spirit, comes now as a dove, as God's peace to us, and settles with declaring 'this is my son, my creation, and I am pleased with him'.

We do live in an age with expectations that everything should be instant; whether it is our food or God's creative and redemptive works – we are people with very little patience; if it isn't now, this instant then we walk away. But the good things of the Kingdom take good soil and time to flourish and for fruit to be born. The creative works of God always have a beginning but that work takes time; millions of years for the solar system. The redemptive work of Christ began in the moment he entered the waters, but this was the beginning and it takes time; for each of us, in most every case, a life time.

For young Barnado, there was a moment, and epiphany, a beginning moment when the work began that saw him transformed from a thug into a world changing Dr; but this transformation took many years. For each of us God has begun a work of redemption in Christ and, as the hymn acknowledges 'God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to years'. For our part there is a need to let that work take place, to welcome the spirit's presence in our lives, maybe to repent of inpatients and look to a journey that see a change from one degree of glory to another, day by day, year by year. And more, to hear the words God says of each of our journey, to each of us – 'you are my child and I am pleased with that!'.

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 for the church and all God's people. We pray especially for all whose faith is being tested and all who may be approaching Jesus for the first time.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the King, for our politicians and all in public office that, through God's grace they may lead us with compassion, remain sensitive to the needs of others and be free from false judgement and condemnation.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray that God will remind us about what is important and what is not, and will help us to overcome our own temptation. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for all who suffer through the sin of others: all victims of abuse, oppression or neglect; we pray for all who need God's help. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy name thou will grant their requests: fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. 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.