



GOSPEL GOSSIP

**'You are my Son, the Beloved,
with you I am well pleased.'**

Matthew 3. 13-37

Sunday 11 January 2023

The Church now enters the season of Epiphany. We associate 'Epiphany' with the visit of the Magi to the infant Christ, which we celebrate at the end of the 'twelve days of Christmas'. So understandably there is a temptation to look upon Epiphany as the end of Christmas rather than a beginning of a period of time in the Church's year when we consider 'revelation'. At Epiphany Christ was revealed as King and God and one who was to suffer to those visitors from the East, and this Sunday we share in the inauguration of his ministry proper as Saviour as he is recognised and proclaimed at his baptism by John.

After his baptism, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and a voice was heard from heaven saying, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.' Jesus was at prayer when this happened, and his first actions after his baptism was to go off into the wilderness.

- What do you think happens at baptism today?
- If you were baptised at an early age, what impact does it have on you?
- Do you believe that at baptism you are adopted as a child of God – beloved and warranting his pleasure?
- In what ways do you feel that the Holy Spirit has become part of you – do you expect a dramatic effect?
- How has your adoption by God been realised in your attitude towards yourself, or to others?

Sometimes baptism is synonymous with conversion. One may be baptised as a result of a dramatic event, such as Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Other times, baptism may be a dawning realisation of the acceptance of faith. In these cases, when we have the ability to consider and decide, baptism is immediately followed by confirmation, when baptismal promises often made of behalf of the young, are confirmed by the individual themselves, having been brought up, God willing, in a context of Christian living and prayer by parents and Godparents.

- Are you a Godparent – what do you do for your Godchild/ren?
- How often do you review your baptism or confirmation promises against the way you live?
- In what ways do you nurture and care for your own spiritual growth?
- What importance do you place on being 'alone with God'?
- Was baptism (or confirmation) a watershed for you – and if not, why not?

In the next few weeks, the Church will offer further examples of how Christ was revealed, or manifested, as the Son of God. These weeks, leading up to Candlemas, give us the opportunity to consider how we recognise the incarnate God in our midst and in our lives, and how our recognition and acceptance of him help shape our lives and being. This is probably a more profitable and positive way of beginning a New Year than reckless promises!