

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty! *First Reading*

Listen, and your soul will live. *First Reading*

Truly, God is my salvation, I trust, I shall not fear. *Psalm*

Father,
your only Son revealed himself to us by becoming man.

May we who share his humanity
come to share his divinity.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to explore further:
Isaiah 55: 1-11; Resp. Psalm: Isaiah 12: 2-6; John 5: 1-9; Mark 1: 7-11

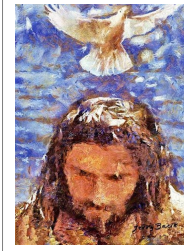
Piero della Francesca, *Baptism of Christ* c.1450



As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



The Baptism of the Lord Year B, 7th January 2024

'You are my Child, the Beloved;
my favour rests on you.'

Today's feast of the Baptism of Our Lord follows on from the Epiphany. It can be seen as a second manifestation of Christ, as the heavens are opened before the whole world. Through Christ's baptism, in which the entire Trinity is present (**Gospel**), the world is made into a second creation.

In the **First Reading**, from Isaiah, we hear how God's word will bear fruit in us. The one we see being baptised in the Gospel is the Word and, by carrying out the Father's will perfectly, all creation is restored.

This is why we can join with the **Psalmist**: '*With joy we shall draw water from the wells of salvation*'!

St John develops this theme (**Second Reading**) when he says that because Jesus overcame the world by water and blood, so we, with the Spirit living in us, can be saved.

This coming week, let's strive to deepen our trust in the Father, who is our salvation; to nurture our faith in the Spirit, who works in us to ensure we do not return empty-handed; and to strengthen our joy in the Son, through whose incarnation and baptism we are made into God's children.



Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
who, when Christ had been baptised in the River Jordan
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,
grant that your children by adoption,
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,
may always be well pleasing to you.

First Reading Isaiah 55: 1–11 (part)

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy corn without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk. Why spend money on what is not bread, your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live. ...

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked one abandon their way, the evil one their thoughts. Let them turn back to the Lord who will take pity on them, to our God who is rich in forgiving; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks. Yes, the heavens are as high above the earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

As I ready myself for this time of prayer, I can, perhaps, take heart in the fact that I am *here*, present in this place. I have heard the call of the Lord in these words from Isaiah – ‘*Come to me*’ – and I have responded.

So, I pause ... to become still, to ask for the help of the Spirit ... to *seek the Lord while he is near*.

I take my time, and then I slowly read the text once or twice. I give my wholehearted attention. I listen with my heart as I stop to drink deeply.

I ponder ... for what am I hungering and thirsting at the moment? What is leaving me satisfied? What is good and what do I enjoy?

Does anything leave me feeling dissatisfied, restless, wanting more? How do I feel about that? Can I trust that even when I sometimes choose things which sap my energy and hope, I can always turn back to God who is *rich in forgiveness*, whose word will bear fruit in me?

The prophet encourages me to ‘*listen; then my soul will live*’.

How good is my listening – to others, to God?

Where, and when, has my soul felt alive?

I might spend any remaining time with these memories before the Lord in gratitude. I end with a slow sign of the cross.

Gospel Mark 1: 7–11

In the course of his preaching John the Baptist said, ‘After me is coming someone who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. And at once, as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.’

I become still, using my preferred and practised method, as I open myself to really listen to the Gospel. I do not rush this.

At his baptism, Jesus takes his first prophetic action. He is the pilgrim *from* heaven who comes to accompany us on our pilgrimage *to* heaven. Though sinless, Jesus joins fully his sinful people – he is truly one of us.

Somebody once said, ‘*I need a God with a skin, one I can touch and feel*’ – though Isaiah, in the First Reading, tells us that God’s ways and thoughts are far above my own.

So how do I feel about this ‘pilgrim God’ who journeys to me to enter fully into my life?

I may have been baptised as a child or as an adult.

What does baptism – my baptism – mean for me?

Do I feel a partner of Jesus, as he is partner to me?

Do I invite him, daily, to fully enter *my* life with all the fullness of *his* life?

Jesus’s relationship with his family and townsfolk, and his solidarity with the world was a very real one. How do I myself respond to the demands of care and love, especially in these times?

In what ways do I feel called to be prophetic?

I spend some time with the Lord ... listening to him, letting my soul come alive. If I want, I could ask him about his word and will for me, that will not return empty-handed.

Perhaps I might like to end by really thanking him from the heart.

Glory be ...