



**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

***The First Sunday of Epiphany***

**Gospel Reading**

**Matthew 3.13-17**

**The Baptism of Jesus**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

**Other Readings: Isaiah 42.1-9**

**Psalm 29**

**Acts 10.34-43**

**Homily**

This time of year is a time for new beginnings. It's a time for fresh starts when we give up things that aren't good for us or take up things that will be good for us, ... with fluctuating degrees of success.

Today in Matthew's Gospel begins the ministry we hold as the basis of our common faith in an account full of powerful symbolism and imagery. In Christ's baptism in the river Jordan by John, we have revealed to us who Jesus is.

We see the Spirit giving the sign that Jesus is ready for his mission and hear the voice of God telling us from whom he comes: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Here is the three-in-one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, unified.

Jesus, the man of flesh and blood, has left his home in Nazareth to walk many miles to be baptised. He has left behind all that he holds dear: his family, his friends, his livelihood. Driven by a strong sense of destiny, he sets out on this unpredictable mission. Now begins his short ministry which will end in crucifixion, death, and resurrection. This is God's plan and purpose and for Jesus there is no turning back.

Whilst we mark Jesus' Baptism and acknowledge him as God's beloved Son, let us also remember the promises God made to each of us at our baptism and recognise what our identity as God's cherished children means.

Baptism isn't just a one-off event; it is meant to guide our entire Christian journey, encouraging us to love God and care for others as we would for ourselves. For us too there is no turning back, we are called to give assurances of God's love to others.

Our ministry should share the Good News that anyone who struggles with their faith or feels lost can find love and forgiveness in Jesus, because we are all ever precious in his sight.

But there will be times in our ministry when, like Jesus, we too will face trials and uncertainties serving God. We too will have our own periods of wandering in the wilderness, and possibly times when we may even doubt God's love.

During these times, we should cling to Jesus through prayer and reflect with thanksgiving on all those moments when we've felt affirmed and blessed in our faith. God's words of love and his promise to be with us always are gifts of grace that don't depend on us earning them or deserving them. God loves us just as we are, each one of us is precious in his sight.

The Anglican baptism service affirms our purpose in mission: "You have received, the light of Christ; walk in this light all the days of your life. Shine as a light in the world, to the glory of God the Father." That should be the focus of any new beginning. Go out into the light and peace of Christ and work together to bring God's light, love and peace into every corner of the world around us.

And if the Lord is here, and his spirit is with us, what have we got to lose?

**Amen**

### **Conversation Questions**

1. Recount a time when you felt affirmed and blessed in your faith and reflect on it with thanksgiving.
2. What will you do differently to mark this time of new beginnings?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

## **Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

## **Collect of the day**

*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.*

*(or)*

*Heavenly Father,  
at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:  
may we recognize him as our Lord  
and know ourselves to be your beloved children;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

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