



*Welcome to*  
St John the Baptist, Midsomer Norton  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Epiphany  
The Baptism of Christ  
10<sup>th</sup> January 2021

***Please pray for:-***

**The Residents of:** West Road, Belle View & Gladstone Street.

**The Sick:-** Rachael Macfarlane, Miranda Cooper, Rose Stenner, Paul & Margaret Knott, Irene Leet, Fr Roy Boots, Nicholas Hambleton, Betty Chiplin, Ethan Horwood, John Lewis, Patricia Flagg, Pat Gilham, Bishop Peter Hancock, Vince Marriot.

**The Departed:** Pam Lamb.

**Years Mind:-** (S)Doris Maggs (M) Herbert Thomas (T) Sam Brooks, Ethel Charlton, (W) Alice Stenner, Bertie Dury (T) Anita Hallam (F) Margery Boulter (S) Horace Coleridge, Michael Spooner.

Let us come before God together to tell the truth about our lives, and let us hear God speak the truth about our lives – we are God’s children, and we are forgiven.

We are made in God’s image, to reflect God’s love and truth. We are sorry for the times we forget this.

Lord, have mercy.

We are God’s children, made for God’s love and delight. We are sorry for the times we neglect this.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ came to save us from our sins. We are sorry for the times we continue sinning in defiance of God’s will.

Lord, have mercy.

## **The Collect**

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**

## **A Reading from Acts 19 v 1 – 7**

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?’ They replied, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ Then he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They answered, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Paul said, ‘John

baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied – altogether there were about twelve of them.

This is the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

Alleluia, alleluia.

This child is the light to enlighten the nations,  
and the glory of your people Israel.

**Alleluia.**

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark  
chapter 1 v 4 – 11**

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And 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. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He 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. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And 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. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’

## Reflection from Fr Guy

“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”



I am an unashamedly visual learner. I'm the one who can understand and follow flatpack assembly instructions – even if they're wrong! So, for me, a picture is worth a thousand words, and when I read, I form a strong visual image of events in my head. During a Sabbatical a few years back, I chose to study religious art, so that I could better appreciate and understand the pictures that had always gripped and fascinated me. So, when I read Mark's version of the Baptism of Christ, this painting immediately sprang to mind. Painted by the Italian artist Piero della Francesca around 1437, it is an image created for a small chapel in his hometown in Tuscany. The painting shows Jesus standing in the River Jordan, while John the Baptist pours water over his head from a bowl. Three angels look on, their faces showing an appalled wonder. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a perfect dove with huge wings, hovers over Jesus. The clouds in the blue sky reflect the dove's shape and draw our eyes towards heaven, which is itself reflected in the clear waters. Just to the right a young man takes off his robe in preparation for his own baptism. In the background are the hills and towns of Tuscany. A large tree almost frames the whole event, reminding us of the tree of life from the garden of Eden, as well as the tree of crucifixion. The painting helps us understand that the baptism of Christ was a moment when heaven and earth came together and Christ's humanity and ours united. As the River Jordan is painted at the foot of the Tuscan hills, so we see that Jesus' baptism is not simply an interesting biblical fact – it is also about our own lives and our own places.

Mark's account of the baptism of Christ establishes both the identity of Jesus as Son of God and his authority, the one more powerful than John the Baptist. It also locates Jesus in a particular place, Nazareth, helping us to see that Jesus is totally human, living in a real place.

Mark doesn't begin his gospel by telling us about Mary and Joseph and the birth in Bethlehem; instead, he tells us about John the Baptist and his message of repentance. All the time he is pointing to Jesus. John the Baptist was a prophet, but Jesus is the Saviour. At Jesus' baptism, something extraordinary happens. As Jesus comes up from the water, he sees the heavens torn apart. The language tells us that this moment of Jesus' baptism is of huge cosmic significance. It changes heaven and earth. The division between the two is gone. The voice from heaven assures Jesus of who he is and of how the Father sees him. The rest of Mark's Gospel tells how Jesus lived out this identity. Almost at the end of this Gospel, as Jesus dies on the cross, a centurion echoes those words he heard first at his baptism: "Truly this man was God's Son!" The life of Jesus has demonstrated the truth of his baptism.

What does all this mean for us, who seek to follow Jesus thousands of years later? Just as Jesus' baptism assured him of who he was, so our baptisms tell us who we are. We are children of God, purely because that's who God says we are. That is the power of baptism. As God's children, may we know the grace God pours into our lives. Confident of that grace, may our lives, spent in generosity and freedom, demonstrate the truth of our own baptisms: for we are children of God.

## **INTERCESSIONS**

Let us bring our prayers before the God who created and loves the whole of creation, confident that God hears us when we pray.

Let us pray for the world, thanking God for its beauty and for the wonder of creation; and bringing before God those parts of the world that are struggling or in pain.

Let us pray for our own neighbourhood, thanking God for the diversity of people and place, and bringing before God all those who need to know God's blessing or help today.

Let us pray for all places of care: for schools, hospitals and care homes, thanking God for every moment of human kindness and wisdom, and bringing before God all those who are struggling with sickness, loneliness or fear.

Let us pray for all those who have died, thanking God for everyone who has touched our lives or shown us something of love and faith, and bringing before God all those who grieve, and who need God's comfort and strength at this time.

Holy God, we thank you that you hear all our prayers, those we speak out loud and those we voice in secret. May we trust you with our deepest desires as we leave our prayers with you.

## **Post Communion**

Lord of all time and eternity,  
you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father  
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:  
by the power of your Spirit complete the heavenly work of our rebirth  
through the waters of the new creation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

## **THIS WEEK**

<b>TUESDAY</b> 12 <sup>th</sup> January	10am – 11am 12 Noon	Private Prayer Funeral
<b>SUNDAY</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> January	9.30 am	Holy Eucharist

### **Because of Covid Restrictions**

Also a reminder to let Carol know by email or phone if you hope to be able to come to our 9.30am service on Sunday January 17<sup>th</sup>  
([carolmoore226@yahoo.com](mailto:carolmoore226@yahoo.com) or 01761 412226)

*For further information please refer to our website [www.stjohnschurch.org.uk](http://www.stjohnschurch.org.uk)*