



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 7 JANUARY 2024 – THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST**

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.**

Psalm 29

- 1 Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ♦
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders; ♦
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; ♦
the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.
- 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; ♦
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf ♦
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
- 7 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.
- 8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare; ♦
in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'
- 9 The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; ♦
the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.
- 10 The Lord shall give strength to his people; ♦
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

A reading from the book Genesis chapter 1, verses 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the 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. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (for Communion services only)

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations
and believed in throughout the world.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 1, verses 4-11.

Glory to you, O Lord

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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Peter...

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and yesterday, because of the way the calendar works, we celebrated the Epiphany of Jesus: that visit by those three strangers from the East who had followed the star and presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh – signs of kingship, divinity and mortality. Both feasts are moments when God reveals Godself to us; something of the truth of God is there, staring us in the face.

As always with God's gifts, we are free to choose. We can nod in a knowing kind of way and continue on our way; or we can give our best attention to seeking to understand and embrace the gift. Both events are puzzling. Together they are even stranger. Just yesterday, it seems, Jesus was still a baby and these foreigners sought him out, presenting gifts that are wildly inappropriate for a young child. But the three wise men seem almost to be more concerned with understanding themselves and grasping the significance of this occurrence for the world than they are with the child. Similarly, John the Baptist knows that Jesus doesn't need the kind of baptism he has been offering – and he tries to dissuade Jesus (though not in Mark's account that we hear today). But the act is needed. God has chosen to reveal the truth in this way. So, as Jesus comes out of the water the heavens open, the Spirit like a dove descends and we hear the word, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." This is the adult Jesus at the start of his ministry, but it is the same Jesus: as both child and adult, Jesus is God with us, Emmanuel. Jesus is with us, not to endorse our false sense of ourselves as the 'crown of all creation', but to invite us to learn how to become children of God; how to receive the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world – the new creation that is no longer bound by the limitations of finitude and mortality. We adore you, O Christ and we bless you.